WORLD REVIEW

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WORLD REVIEW

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EDITORIAL

GEORGE ORWELL left two unpublished manuscripts when he died. One was an essay about his early school days, the other a slim volume containing his diary. The latter was kept over two periods during the early part of the war, the first from 25 May 1940, until 28 August 1941, the second from the middle of March 1942, until the middle of November of that year.

The diary was not resumed again; nor did the fragments actually ever serve the purpose for which they were intended. Like most writers, George Orwell had thought of using the impressions which had formed in his mind, under pressure of war, at a later stage and in more permanent form. But the impressions did not keep pace with the events, and what had started so hopefully was soon to turn, and sooner in Orwell's case than in most others, into weary disappointment. Orwell's 'happy period', to which *The Lion and the Unicorn* and the diary belong, did not last long. Here in this diary we see him anxiously following the fortunes of the war; he wishes, 'horrible though it is', that the B.E.F. is 'cut to pieces sooner than capitulate'; he is impatient at having to write book reviews 'at such a time', when so much is at stake, when 'everything is disintegrating.' And at the same moment he makes his most extraordinary statement: 'One must remain alive . . . if necessary in the concentration camps.' In retrospect, this acceptance, however temporary, of the ultimate evil, makes strange reading, coming from the author of *1984*. It explains why he could not make use of the notes at a later stage, but the diary remains none the less a true reflection of his ideas at the time.

And this was the real, and valid, reason which Orwell had in mind when he started to keep it. He was certain that, after a lapse of five or eight years, none of us would remember the events that had seemed so important at the time, or the strange views many of us must have held in those days. And, looking back at the events through Orwell's eyes, it is astonishing to see how right he was.

It so happened that the present editor had a chance of reading the diary

in 1944. He was then attached to a publishing firm to which the manuscript had been submitted, but the time, it was felt, was not propitious for its publication. The end of the war was in sight but still unreal. Orwell agreed that a diary of this type should wait, and it was he who felt, strangely enough, that it should not appear before 1950, about ten years after the events he had described. Today, the records as he left them in his notebooks, have, indeed, the value of a document that brings to life a forgotten and short-lived period of high expectation.

For our purpose, we have thinned the manuscript, partly to avoid repetition or to eliminate mere newspaper reports, and partly to omit certain speculations which have since been superseded by our knowledge of the course of events. The excerpts, moreover, have been taken from the first part of the diary only. The second, which was kept when Orwell was working at the B.B.C., is unusually factual in character and journalistic in style, and concerned almost exclusively with the noting down of public events. It was obviously a period of waiting for Orwell.

STEFAN SCHIMANSKI

ANNOUNCEMENT

The next issue, July, will be the last under the present editorship.

S. S.

GEORGE ORWELL

BERTRAND RUSSELL

GEORGE ORWELL was equally remarkable as a man and as a writer. His personal life was tragic, partly owing to illness, but still more owing to a love of humanity and an incapacity for comfortable illusion. In our time the kind of man who, in Victorian days, would have been a comfortable Radical, believing in the perfectibility of Man and ordered evolutionary progress, is compelled to face harsher facts than those that afforded our grandfathers golden opportunities for successful polemics. Like every young man of generous sympathies, Orwell was at first in revolt against the social system of his age and nation, and inspired with hope by the Russian Revolution. Admiration of Trotsky, and experience of the treatment meted out to Trotskyists by Stalinists in the Spanish Civil War, destroyed his hopes of Russia without giving him any other hopes to put in their place. This, combined with illness, led to the utter despair of *1984*.

Orwell was not by nature pessimistic or unduly obsessed by politics. He had wide interests, and would have been genial if he had lived at a less painful time. In an admirable essay on Dickens, he even allows himself to comment not unsympathetically upon Dickens's belief that all would be well if people would behave well, and that it is not the reform of institutions that is really important. Orwell had too much human sympathy to imprison himself in a creed. He sums up Dickens by describing him as 'laughing, with a touch of anger in his laughter, but no triumph, no malignity. It is the face of a man who is always fighting against something, but who fights in the open and is not frightened, the face of a man who is *generously angry*—in other words, of a nineteenth-century liberal, a free intelligence, a type hated with equal hatred by all the smelly little orthodoxies which are now contending for our souls.'

But our age is dominated by politics, as the fourth century was dominated by theology, and it is by his political writings that Orwell will be remembered—especially by *Animal Farm*.

Animal Farm naturally suggests comparison with *Gulliver's Travels*, particularly with the part dealing with the Houyhnhnms. Orwell's animals, it is true, including even the noble horse, are not much like Swift's incarnations of frosty reason. But Orwell, like Swift after Queen Anne's death, belonged to a beaten party, and both men travelled through defeat to despair. Both embodied their despair in biting and masterly satire. But

while Swift's satire expresses universal and indiscriminating hate, Orwell's has always an undercurrent of kindliness: he hates the enemies of those whom he loves, whereas Swift could only love (and that faintly) the enemies of those whom he hated. Swift's misanthropy, moreover, sprang mainly from thwarted ambition, while Orwell's sprang from the betrayal of generous ideals by their nominal advocates. In a penetrating essay on 'Gulliver', Orwell set forth justly and convincingly the pettiness of Swift's hopes and the stupidity of his ideals. In neither respect did Orwell share Swift's defeats.

There is a very interesting little essay by Orwell on 'Wells, Hitler and the World State', written in 1941, at the beginning of which year Wells, unwarned by his silliness of 1914, was maintaining that Hitler's offensive power was spent: 'his ebbing and dispersed military resources are now probably not so very much greater than the Italians before they were put to the test in Greece and Africa,' Wells is quoted as announcing. Countering Wells's propaganda for a World State, Orwell retorts: 'What is the use of pointing out that a World State is desirable? All sensible men for decades past have been substantially in agreement with what Mr. Wells says; but the sensible men have no power. Hitler is a criminal lunatic, and Hitler has an army of millions of men.' To the end of his days Wells could not face the fact that 'sensible men have no power.'

Orwell faced it, and lived, however bleakly and unhappily, in the actual world. Elderly Radicals, like Wells and myself, find the transition to a world of stark power difficult. I am grateful to men who, like Orwell, decorate Satan with the horns and hooves without which he remains an abstraction.

Our age calls for a greater energy of belief than was needed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Imagine Goethe, Shelley and Wells confined for years to Buchenwald; how would they emerge? Obviously not as they went in. Goethe would no longer be 'the Olympian', nor Shelley the 'ineffectual angel', and Wells would have lost his belief in the omnipotence of reason. All three would have acquired knowledge as to the actual world, but would they have gained in wisdom? That would depend upon their courage, their capacity to endure, and the strength of their intellectual convictions. Most philosophers have more breadth of outlook when adequately nourished than when driven mad by hunger, and it is by no means a general rule that intense suffering makes men wise.

The men of our day who resemble Goethe, Shelley or Wells in temperament and congenital capacity have mostly gone through, either personally or through imaginative sympathy, experiences more or less resembling imprisonment in Buchenwald. Orwell was one of these men. He preserved an impeccable love of truth, and allowed himself to learn even the most painful lessons. But he lost hope. This prevented him from being a

prophet for our time. Perhaps it is impossible, in the world as it is, to combine hope with truth; if so, all prophets must be false prophets. For my part, I lived too long in a happier world to be able to accept so glowing a doctrine. I find in men like Orwell the half, but only the half, of what the world needs; the other half is still to seek.

A WRITER'S LIFE

T. R. FYVEL

'THE savage pilgrimage'—the term has been applied to the life of D. H. Lawrence. It could equally be used for the life of George Orwell, who died of consumption, like Lawrence, and died at much the same age. It is too soon yet for any detailed life of Orwell; the following is an attempt to adumbrate its outline, based on personal contact over ten years, on fragments of information he let fall in his writings (especially in *The Road to Wigan Pier*), and on assumptions one could draw from both.

II

George Orwell died just after the century had passed its halfway mark, on 23 January, 1950. For some months previously he had been lying ill in the private ward of a hospital in the centre of London. In this private ward, a square pane of glass is let into the door of each private sickroom, through which patient and caller can see each other. I visited him fairly often during these months, and my first glimpse of him was always through this glass, and always a slight shock, at the sight of his thin, drawn face, looking ominously waxen and still against the white pillow. But then, as I knocked, a sudden smile would bring his features back to life as he saw that another visitor was calling. And as one entered, he would immediately launch into some practical suggestion, such as 'Hallo, T., would you like to help yourself to a drink? There should be some whisky on the sideboard,' or else, 'If you find it too cold in here, don't worry about closing the window and turning on the heater.' His need thus to plunge straight into conversation was more than ordinary shyness. It had something of the schoolboy about it. And to the last, even on his sick-bed, Orwell retained those boyish traits which were so marked in his character.

How ill was he? It was difficult to discuss this. Even while he talked

freely and vigorously, his condition looked worrying. From hints he had occasionally let drop, I knew that during and after the war he had suffered from spells of utter exhaustion. In 1946 and 1947 he had managed with difficulty to carry on journalist work. Then, together with his adopted son, a small child, he had left for the island of Jura, in the Hebrides, in order to write. He wrote few letters: worrying reports came that he had caught a bad chill, that he had exhausted himself in struggling to complete *1984*, that he had collapsed and was in hospital in Glasgow. In the late autumn of 1949 he was transferred to London, already very weak. His one remaining lung, he said, was not much worse, but he had not responded well to streptomycin treatment; and his body looked painfully, frighteningly wasted. Indeed, once or twice when I looked at him, I felt that the grim scene in *1984* when the hero, Winston Smith, weeps in prison at his shrunken, tortured body, had been drawn from life—his own life in hospital; and that the relentless, intangible force which crushes Winston Smith in *1984* symbolised not even so much the totalitarian threat Orwell feared as the intangible illness in his own wasted body, foreshadowing his own death.

Yet he did not like talking about this. To the last, he kept his form. He read the newspapers carefully, watching out for journalist misuse of words —one of his pet worries—and noting down instances. The last piece of work he was contemplating was to be a study of Joseph Conrad. The interaction of the Continental and the English mind held a special interest for him. He had re-read *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Skies*; and was delving again into the story of the European anarchists. We talked a great deal of this and other things. For instance, Jewish intellectuals—why were they so exaggeratedly sensitive? That was another question he found of perpetual interest. Or there were the alternatives for the future education of his son. Orwell thought he should go to a good Public School, but characteristically hoped that, by that time, exclusive Public Schools might be abolished. Again, *1984* was appearing in German, with great success, in *Der Monat*, the American monthly in Berlin. He had only a sketchy knowledge of German, and yet a surprising feeling for the language. I went over some German pages with him, and he was pleased to learn what was new to him, that Goebbels had systematically developed a German 'Newspeak'—he had guessed right again. Or else—a favourite theme—he discussed the various ways of making tea; and would the Swiss sanatorium to which he was to go provide him with the strong, dark brew of tea he liked. The clear Alpine water, he thought, might be unsuitable.

On the last occasion I saw him, he seemed particularly cheerful. It was a Friday; the following Tuesday he was due to leave for Switzerland by special charter aircraft. Everything was arranged; the Swiss authorities had agreed to facilitate all formalities. Up in the Alps, he hoped to be allowed to work for an hour or two a day. We sat reminiscing about our early

schooldays—mine democratic, at one of the best State schools in German Switzerland, his Imperialist, at an English snob-prep. school. For the first time he talked to me about himself at Eton, relating harmless and amusing incidents. Before I left, he urged me again to visit him in his Alpine sanatorium; I said I would come if I could manage it. The next morning I received the news that he had died suddenly, within a minute or so, after a haemorrhage.

III

George Orwell was born in 1903; like quite a few distinguished men of his generation—Orde Wingate is a name that comes to mind—born in India, and of Scottish parents. His father was an official in the Bengal Service, not in a leading position. His own real name—and this may surprise some—was Eric Arthur Blair. Indeed, his very early writings were signed 'E. A. Blair', until he decided to change his literary name at the age of twenty-seven or eight. Much later, I once asked him why he decided to give up such a perfectly sound name. His explanation was characteristic. 'Eric,' he said—he didn't like the name because of its romantic Norse associations with the sentimental schoolboy histories of his childhood. And Blair was a Scots name, and he himself—he was emphatic about this—he had a prejudice against the Scots, because at his prep. school the wealthy boys boasted about their Scottish summer holidays, and also because he was taught at the same school—against all historical evidence—that the Scots were fiercer and better soldiers than the English. In short, he himself felt, and wanted to be, English. 'Orwell', that was the name of the English river on whose banks he once lived. And what could be more English, in the best patriotic sense, than 'George'? This typical explanation was partly true, for England, the country to which he came as a boy, was, and remained, his genuine love. Yet the explanation was also partly evasive: names are highly symbolical things, and, as he knew, his own change of *nom de guerre* surely also represented a deliberate act to cut loose from the past, from his childhood, from certain unresolved conflicts which he could never quite shake off.

Through the place of his birth, Orwell had been endowed with vivid early memories, those indelible childhood memories, of the colonial scene —of India, its glaring sun, the swarming brown people and the gap between them and oneself. It was a scene he never quite forgot, and which was to give a bright colour to his future writing. There were also two daughters in the Blair family, one older, one younger than himself, and in 1911, as was the general custom, his mother came with the children to England, when he was eight years old; and he was sent to a fashionable boys' preparatory school on the South Coast.

In later years, Orwell talked very seldom of his family or early childhood, at least not in personal terms. His reticence seemed to go very deep.

But one point he liked to make clear, because it irritated him, was that he was *not*, as sometimes described, an 'upper-class rebel'. Though he went to Eton on a scholarship, he insisted always that he came, in fact, from an insecure middle-class family always struggling to keep its head above water. As he wrote in the autobiographical chapter in *The Road to Wigan Pier*:

> 'I was born into what you may describe as the lower-upper-middle class. The upper-middle class, which had its heyday in the 'eighties and 'nineties, with Kipling as its poet laureate, was a sort of mound of wreckage left behind when the tide of Victorian prosperity receded. Or perhaps it would be better to change the metaphor and describe it not as a mound but a layer—the layer of society lying between £2,000 and £300 a year: my own family was not far from the bottom.'

Though he defined it thus in money terms, the essential point about the English class system, he went on, was that it was *not* entirely explicable in terms of money. The distinguishing traditions of the English upper-middle class were not to any extent commercial, but mainly military, official, and professional, and of course semi-aristocratic and gentlemanly. But the fact that this class extended down to people living on £300 to £400 a year, and trying to ignore the gulf between themselves and those on £2,000 a year was, he says:

> 'a queer business. You lived, so to speak, at two levels simultaneously. Theoretically, you knew all about servants and how to tip them, although in practice you had one or, at most, two servants. Theoretically you knew how to wear your clothes and how to order a dinner, although in practice you could never afford to go to a decent tailor or a decent restaurant. Theoretically you knew how to shoot and ride, although in practice you had no horses to ride and not an inch of ground to shoot over.'

At their best, these pretensions had their snobbish absurdity. But because they belonged essentially to the nineteenth-century Imperial heyday of England, as the twentieth century progressed they became increasingly painful, or even grotesque. At least, here is Orwell, looking back at the age of thirty-three when writing *Wigan Pier*:

> 'In the kind of shabby-genteel family that I am talking about there is far more consciousness of poverty than in any working-class family above the level of the dole. Rent and clothes and school bills are an unending nightmare, and every luxury, even a glass of beer, is an unwarrantable extravagance. Practically the whole family income goes in keeping up appearances. It is obvious that people of this kind are in an anomalous position and one might be tempted to write them off as mere exceptions and therefore unimportant. Actually, however, they are or were fairly numerous.'

Indeed they were; they were the shabby-genteel class which Orwell, unlike many of his friends, knew from the *inside*, and this enabled him to write so clearly about them. He knew that their King-and-Empire patriotism derived closely from the fact that in India or Malaya or Kenya a man could, thank God, still live like a gentleman, with cheap horses, shooting, and servants, and that this patriotism yet existed in its own right. He enumerated the hatreds of this class—for the working classes 'who stank', the shopkeepers who were no gentlemen, the colonial natives who were 'niggers'. But he knew equally that these prejudices were not merely contemptible, as most intellectual Socialists held, but were the prejudices of an ill-paid English middle-class, itself ground down by lack of money and, as he said, forced to live on two levels. But though he saw the class from which he sprung so clearly—most of the heroes of his books were of this lower-upper-middle class, even Winston Smith in *1984*—yet he could never shake himself quite free from its outlook. As late as the War years, when he was a Socialist, when he mixed with cosmopolitan, intellectual friends, and wrote for *Tribune*, his whole appearance and manner still seemed strangely that of a somewhat down-at-heel Sahib.

IV

In 1911, when he was eight years old, Orwell went to board at a preparatory school in the South of England, where he remained till he was twelve. And here one may tentatively take the search for Orwell the artist one step further, for these years, during which he was growing into a talented, sensitive, introspective boy, were years during which, as he himself suggested, he underwent suffering such as only a child can experience, and which left him psychologically scarred for the rest of his life. As I write this, I remember that Flory, the chief character of *Burmese Days*, like all Orwell's heroes a partial self-portrait, was drawn with a disfiguring scar across the face. This scar, one may guess, was only the physical expression of Orwell's own sense of unhappiness, of guilt and failure which, from his own account, he carried away from his early days at school.

The choice of education was certainly unfortunate. The preparatory school on the South Coast seems to have been an expensive and snobbish establishment, even for its day, specialising in grooming wealthy boys for Eton, Harrow, and half a dozen other expensive schools. In addition, however, the school took in each year two or three bright boys at very much reduced fees, boys whose explicit task it was to cram hard and win entrance scholarships to Eton, Harrow, etc. By doing so, they naturally brought prestige and profit to the school. Nevertheless, the school atmosphere was such that these reduced-fee boys were constantly reminded that they were not 'the right type of boy' (like boys from titled families or whose fathers

had grouse-shoots in Scotland) and should be eternally grateful for the privilege of attending the school.

Of these boys, George Orwell was one. He had other handicaps. He was already affected by his lung complaint (which was not discovered) and usually found compulsory football and athletics a bore, and at times a torture. In addition, there was X, the wife of the master in charge of him, a woman of decided views and personality who had established an unusual ascendancy over the boys. To be the right kind of boy, in terms of money, family background, athletic success and the correct King-and-Country patriotic views, was to enjoy the favour of X; to fail in these qualities was to be cast into outer darkness. Orwell, as he related, was not only among those scorned and perpetually corrected by X; in addition, X seemed to single him out to impress on him that he was stupid and sullen, utterly the wrong type, and would obviously come to no good.

One can see, or at least one can guess, that X deepened the dualism in Orwell's character. While he rebelled against her censure, *somewhere* her voice upholding the right sort of views remained—he never quite lost a slight sense of emotional discomfort at being an intellectual Socialist. Or, conversely, when X told him that in spite of what had been done for him at the school, he would come to nothing because that was in him—did he not, as it were, 'act out' this part fifteen years later, when he spent a year living with Paris slum dwellers and casual English tramps as one of them? Or did he not, at least, have to go through this experience of being a social outcast in order to get it out of his system?

All this is speculation. Orwell, one may be sure, was also an exceptionally talented schoolboy. The deepened self-mistrust, the sense of guilt and failure, were only one side of his school life between eight and thirteen. He managed in the end to be excused from games; he roamed across the fields and woods, fished, collected butterflies and acquired that love of the soft, gentle Southern English landscape which is portrayed with such love in his books. And, since he had a first-class brain, he won, without much difficulty, not one but two scholarships, one of them to Eton. And so one may picture him at thirteen, a tall, ungainly boy, successful in his work but with his self-confidence partly destroyed, as he said good-bye in 1916 to the little school where he had suffered so much, and which he never revisited.

V

At Eton, Orwell liked to tell his friends, nothing much happened to him. The choice of Eton was fortunate, for here, in this genuinely upper-class atmosphere, he enjoyed much more privacy than he would have had at most other schools. But he formed no great attachment for Eton.

Yet, by contrast with the prison-like atmosphere at preparatory school,

at Eton he felt 'relatively happy'. Now that the climax of cramming for his scholarship was over, he bothered little about working hard. He took classics, but at the age of thirty, he said, he could not even repeat the Greek alphabet any more. He was still handicapped through being always short of money, but he made valuable friends. Cyril Connolly, who had been with him at the preparatory school, was also with him at Eton; another friend was Richard (now Sir Richard) Rees who around 1930 edited *The Adelphi* and there published Orwell's first essays, and also some poems. Also a contemporary of Orwell's at Eton was John Strachey, whose political views Orwell was to attack bitterly in the nineteen-thirties.

An important point was that Orwell's senior years at Eton fell into the period immediately after 1918 when Eton, like other leading English schools, was probably more revolutionary and 'Bolshie' than ever before—or after. This mood was a reaction against the unbearable four years of slaughter in the trenches and of a wave of hatred among the young for the 'old men' who were held responsible. According to Orwell—and his account seems slightly exaggerated—in his day at Eton the O.T.C. was derided, even the flag mocked. He relates that when in 1920 an English master set the question 'Who are the ten greatest living men?' fifteen boys out of sixteen included Lenin. (How times have changed!) Later Orwell tended to regard this ebullient juvenile Leftism as shallow; with one side of his character he would in any case have thought it wrong; I believe, for instance, that he himself rather enjoyed serving in the O.T.C.

After the period of pleasant unemotional relaxation at Eton, Orwell in 1922 went out to Burma into the Indian Imperial Police, when he was not quite twenty years old. And here we come to the beginning of Orwell the writer. At preparatory school he had suffered shockingly at the hands of those in authority over him. So he did in Burma, but the situation was even worse: he now had not only superiors, but had himself to wield that evil thing, authority. The evidence is in his books. Though this is not the place to discuss them in detail (they are discussed in detail elsewhere in this volume), one must use them in any study of his life. For, in personal affairs, Orwell was always extraordinarily reticent, so shy as to be almost secretive. Though he seemed to like to deal in personal asides, e.g. 'When I was fourteen or fifteen I was an odious little snob', this was always in terms of social classification: the self-revelation is only apparent. In his novels, on the other hand, he himself stands out; for, if he had sharp power of insight, he had much less of invention. From Flory in his first novel, *Burmese Days*, to Winston Smith in *1984*, his last, all his heroes are Orwell himself, suitably transmuted.

He served as a policeman in Burma for five years, during 1922–7, from his twentieth to his twenty-fifth year. One may imagine him there, a tall, somewhat consumptive and sensitive young man, a very undecided young

man, well able to act the Sahib, yet at heart a rebel, liking to shoot and also liking strange books, and with his innate sense of guilt magnified to unbearable intensity by the authority and power of punishment at his disposal. What made it particularly difficult was his job as policeman. He had decided early on that white rule in the East was an unwarrantable tyranny about which one could say little except a cynical 'Of course we've no right in this blasted country at all, only now we're here, for God's sake let's stay here.' Still, British doctors, engineers or road-builders could outwardly play the rôle of benevolent despots; but he, as a policeman, was the actual instrument of naked despotism, forced to do the dirty work. And he himself, he felt, was the last person who ought to wield authority and inflict punishment: as he stated in a revealing sentence: 'I never went into a jail without feeling (most visitors to jails feel the same) that my place was really on the other side of the bars.' But at the same time, his sense of guilt was a complex one. He was no open rebel against authority. Outwardly he could, and did, act the part of a pukka Sahib. He himself tells of an occasion when he had sat up at night in a train with a colleague, damning the British Empire: 'In the haggard morning light when the train crawled into Mandalay, we parted as guiltily as any adulterous couple.'

Out of the spark of this conflict came his first novel, *Burmese Days*, written quite a few years later. It is a young man's book, a young man's sad book.

The Burma years also produced the short reportage essay *Shooting an Elephant* (later published in the first Penguin *New Writing*). Orwell had to shoot the elephant because it had run amok in a native quarter; his treatment of the action and his feelings were as if he had committed judicial murder. As an intense, passionate descriptive piece it is superb; V. S. Pritchett said of it that it showed 'Orwell had the first quality that marks the outstanding writer—the dilatory eye.'

But this essay was not published till many years later, and *Burmese Days*, too, only appeared seven years after Orwell's return from Burma.

VI

This return took place in 1927; he said of it later, in the section 'How I became a Socialist' in *Wigan Pier*:

> 'When I came home on leave in 1927 I was already half determined to throw up the job, and one sniff of English air decided me. I was not going back to be part of that evil despotism. But I wanted much more than merely to escape from my job.'

What did he want? The next year or two were the strangest in Orwell's life. He, the intellectual, the old Etonian, the ex-Sahib, deliberately went slumming in the most real sense, doing menial work in France, and

associating with English tramps as one of them. Why did he do this? In the same passage in *Wigan Pier* he gave his emotional reasons:

> 'For five years I had been a part of an oppressive system, and it left me with a bad conscience. Innumerable remembered faces—faces of prisoners in the dock, of men waiting in the condemned cells, of subordinates I had bullied and aged peasants I had snubbed, of servants and coolies I had hit with my fist in moments of rage (nearly everyone does these things in the East, at least occasionally; Orientals can be very provoking)—haunted me intolerably. I was conscious of an immense weight of guilt that I had got to expiate.'

He was young and politically inexperienced, he goes on; he still believed in the simple theory that the oppressed were always right. And so he went in search of the oppressed.

> 'The frightful doom of a decent working man suddenly thrown on the streets after a lifetime of steady work, his agonised struggles against economic laws he does not understand, all this was outside the range of my experience. When I thought of poverty, I thought of it in terms of brute starvation. Therefore my mind turned immediately towards the extreme cases, the social outcasts: tramps, beggars, criminals, prostitutes. These were "the lowest of the low", and these were the people with whom I wanted to get into contact. What I profoundly wanted, at that time, was to find some way of getting out of the respectable world altogether. I meditated upon it a great deal; I even planned parts of it in detail; how one could sell everything, etc. . . . '

That was his explanation, ten years later. But from hints he let drop, one may perhaps hazard another motive, arising out of a deeper and earlier sense of guilt. Deep in his mind, perhaps, there was still the voice of X, the feminine tyrant of his preparatory school, still echoing in his mind, so that he had to fulfil the prediction that he would come to no good, to 'get out of the respectable world altogether' in actual experience before he could get the conflict out of his system. There was probably yet another reason for the decision. Many years later, when I tackled Orwell on the subject, he said that in actual fact he had found it difficult to find work on returning from Burma. He had little money, few social connections, and no special trade; it was a time of unemployment; a respectable job would have been difficult enough. But in any case, the fact remains that, after returning from Burma, Orwell spent several months as an ill-paid dishwasher and slum-dweller in Paris and later tramped from place to place through the Home Counties. The upshot of the experience was his first published work, *Down and Out in Paris and London.* This book of autobiographical reportage was published in 1933.

A new writer had arrived. But Orwell's first book did not sell well.

Indeed, his first years as a writer in the early nineteen-thirties were for Orwell years of endless struggle against poverty. He was at the start anything but a facile journalist; his passion for integrity made him reject two-thirds of what he put on paper. To keep himself during these years he worked as a private tutor and an underpaid schoolmaster in private schools. He married; and, together with his wife, for a time he kept a village pub and a village general store (its income, he said later, worked out at a pound per week). His lungs intermittently gave trouble again. His second novel, *The Clergyman's Daughter*, appeared in 1934, followed by *Burmese Days*. Compton Mackenzie wrote after the latter book: 'No realistic writer during the last five years has produced three volumes which can compare in directness, vigour, courage, and vitality, with these three volumes from the pen of Mr. George Orwell.'

Yet Orwell's success remained confined to increasing prestige among a few discerning critics. (Once, in 1940, he told me that he reckoned—he loved making such calculations—that his literary earnings over the decade 1930–40 worked out at not quite three pounds per week.) The theme of agonising middle-class poverty, of a ludicrous poverty, is one which seemed seared into Orwell's earlier works, especially in his novel *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, with its painful rather than tragic picture of a young bookseller's assistant taking his girl out on a Sunday with—agonising knowledge—only six and tuppence in his pocket. In its way, it was a social document of the times, too: Orwell said that, after the novel appeared, all kinds of young men wrote to him and said this had been exactly their own experience. But while he was turning out these novels of which, incidentally, he was afterwards very critical, hypercritical, life in England was becoming increasingly 'political', even among writers. Orwell, too, had attempted to become active as a Socialist. In 1936–7 came his first chance of prominence when his publisher, Victor Gollancz, asked him to make a journey through a depressed industrial area and to write a personal report. This report, which appeared under the title of *The Road to Wigan Pier*, was a Left Book Club choice.

The offer had coincided with Orwell's own urge to learn more of the English industrial working class by direct contact. His earlier desire 'to get out of the respectable world' had by now gone. But it had been replaced by a strong attachment for the 'ordinary people' of England who were untouched by the taint of power, coupled with a dislike of middle-class intellectuals. From this sentiment sprang his studies of such popular social phenomena as comic picture postcards, or schoolboys' penny dreadfuls, as well as his interest in best-seller novelists such as Dickens and Kipling—interests which were to produce his most brilliant essays. An ominous aspect of the thirties which had caught his attention was the growing cult of power and brutality in the machine age which he saw

expressed in the gangster novels of the type of *No Orchids for Miss Blandish.* By this time, 1936, he was also convinced that the day of his own class, the lower reaches of the embittered upper-middle class, was done: 'I never open one of Kipling's books or go into one of the huge dull shops which were once the favourite haunt of the upper-middle class, without thinking "Change and Decay in all around I see".' He wanted to know more of the British workers. His Socialist work might bring him in touch with the working class intelligentsia, 'but they hardly are more typical than tramps or burglars.' Hence his interest in Wigan.

The result of his impressionist tour was what he would have called a 'good-bad-book'. And yet his descriptions of the shocking working-class squalor he found were vivid, heartfelt, and the chapter in which, with gusto, he depicted the hatred felt by the British middle-class for the workers, aroused a fierce outcry.

By the time this got under way, however, he was gone, too. In 1936 Franco, supported by the Axis, had raised the banner of Fascist revolt against the Spanish Republic. As a Socialist engaged in a desperate search for honest identification of belief and action, Orwell had no hesitation. He joined up, on the Republican side.

There was always a touch of Don Quixote about all Orwell's knight-errantry. It was typical of his political individualism that, through accident, he joined not the International Brigade, but the so-called 'Trotskyist' P.O.U.M., a Spanish Left-Wing opposition party later suppressed by the Spanish Communists. It was typical, too, that he was wounded, not in action but on a quiet day, through sticking his head out of a trench. But he was wounded very badly (a bullet went through his neck and his life was saved only by a fraction of an inch) and by the time he came out of hospital the P.O.U.M. was proscribed as 'counter-revolutionary'. With a number of their British I.L.P. friends under arrest, Orwell and his wife had to flee for their lives into France. From his experience of civil war, of death, dirt, and military hospitals and prisons, Orwell returned with his faith in 'ordinary people' unimpaired, but with his eyes opened to one fact: Communist despotism could be far more ruthless than the earlier, milder tyranny which it overthrew. All this he expressed in *Homage to Catalonia* (1938), one of the most clear-headed books to come out of Spanish Civil War, honestly and beautifully written, but which, partly because it was a book of the still unfashionable non-Communist Left, partly because this was Orwell's fate, sold only a few hundred copies over the next year or two.

Back in England, in 1939, there appeared his next novel, *Coming Up for Air.* Its theme was that of a middle-aged travelling salesman, married, not very successful, a most ordinary figure, bewildered by the 'streamlined' new age with which he could not cope, fearful of a coming war which he could not understand, who set out to revisit the scenes of his childhood, with

their lost happiness. And here Orwell was touching on one of his profound nostalgias, a longing for the peace and beauty of the English pre-1914 countryside (the 'golden country', he called it in *1984*), of those fields, woods, and streams, where he himself had found peace when escaping from the tyranny of prep-school. And for the first time—he was now thirty-six—one of his novels enjoyed a moderate popular success, and went into several editions. But before he could write its successor, the war came.

VII

I first met the Orwells early in 1940. During most of the thirties I had been abroad in remote places and from my reading had marked out Orwell as one of three English writers I would like to meet. It was probably my second or third encounter with him which remained in my memory. It was at his small mews-flat near Baker Street, in London, a rather poverty-stricken affair of one or two rather bare, austere rooms with second-hand furniture. I saw an extremely tall, thin man, looking more than his years, with gentle eyes and deep lines that hinted at suffering on his face. The word 'saint' was used by one of his friends and critics after his death, and—well—perhaps he had a touch of this quality. Certainly there was nothing of the fierce pamphleteer in his personal manner. He was awkward, almost excessively mild. Both about him and his wife (who was also not in very good health, and died under a minor operation in 1945) there was something strangely unphysical.

On his desk, I recall, I saw several letters which were obviously from the Income Tax authorities—unopened. He had left the letters lying there, Orwell said, because at the moment he simply had no money. I asked lightly why he did not open them, face the worst and suggest an arrangement to the Inspector of Taxes. Orwell's answer suggested that he felt it in some way almost dishonourable that he had temporarily no money to pay his tax. As I write this, I recall another incident: when I succeeded him for a time as literary editor of *Tribune*, I discovered a whole drawer full of manuscripts, mostly hopelessly unsuitable, which Orwell had nevertheless accepted. I asked him why he had done this. He agreed sadly that it was almost incredible how badly some people could write. But the bad writers—that was the trouble—did not know how wretched their work was. And, however fiercely he might polemicise against intellectuals in general, he had not the heart to tell any individual writer that his work was fit only for rejection. So the drawers of his desk at *Tribune* had remained full of unrejected rejects.

For a while we saw each other regularly. The year 1940—Dunkirk, Battle of Britain, beginning of the Blitz—was the new *annus mirabilis*, and our joint publisher suggested that Orwell and I should together edit a series of

pamphlets in book form dealing with war aims. This we did, and for some months Orwell was very active in this work and seemed to enjoy it.

At this time, too, he was trying unsuccessfully to get past the doctors to join the Army (the efforts of some of his intellectual friends to avoid war service roused him to scorn). As next best thing, he joined the Home Guard, where he took his duties very seriously. At the end of 1941, I think, he joined the Indian Service of the B.B.C. I saw little of him there, because I was presently whisked abroad. But I knew he was unhappy—once again he was exposed to the authority of superior officials, and worse, had to wield authority himself. I have a feeling—I am afraid I have a feeling—that the harmless Overseas Branch of the B.B.C. in Oxford Street, with its life of directives, conferences and canteen meals, served as the model for the nightmare picture of the Ministry of Truth in *1984*; the patriotic wartime propaganda line he had to put out, exaggerated a hundred times, became the totalitarian distortion and suppression of news and fact in the 'Ingsoc' he imagined.

When I returned to England in 1945, I found Orwell's situation much changed. No longer in the B.B.C., he had become a practised regular journalist, suddenly able to write to time-table and with quite an astonishing output. Week by week he wrote his incisive 'As I Please', for *Tribune*; he also wrote for the *Observer*, for the American Left-Wing *Partisan Review* and *New Leader*, and he was reviewing for the *Manchester Evening News*. He was well-known in political circles; he had been literary editor of *Tribune* while Aneurin Bevan was its editor. Among his close friends were Arthur Koestler, and David Astor, who was about to take over the editorship of the *Observer*. And above all he had just published *Animal Farm*, that savage satire on the Soviet Union whose nostalgic descriptions of the English countryside made it a perfect tale in its own right. For once his passions had been kept in check, and his sense of construction had not failed him. *Animal Farm* had been an instantaneous success, especially in America, where it was the Book of the Month choice. At forty-two, Orwell was for the first time in his life comparatively well off.

But I found him in character quite unchanged—and physically very tired. His wife had died suddenly; he was left with a small adopted son who for the rest of his life was to be his main love and interest. And in his mind he was worrying as much as ever before. He was worrying about the Communist totalitarian threat which he felt the West did not adequately realise, and must be made to realise; he worried about the atom bomb and the political dangers inherent in the ascendancy of scientists; he worried about the post-war exhaustion in England, and about the adulteration of the English language by journalists, propagandist and advertisers, a subject to which he devoted more and more attention. In spite of his many new friendships, he remained a solitary and lonely man. He wanted to get away

from it all, he told me, and talked about his little farm in the island of Jura, in the Hebrides, where he wanted to make his new home. For another two years, however, he worked strenuously as a polemical journalist; he came regularly to a weekly meeting at *Tribune*, and wrote several long studies for an intelligent but short-lived periodical, *Polemic*, on Gandhi, on Tolstoy, on Communism, on language.

Then, in 1947, he packed up suddenly and was gone to Jura. The reason he gave was that he wanted to take his adopted son and himself, for the years that remained him, away from possible atomic war. But this was conversational rationalisation. The motives that took him away were two. First, he wanted time to write *1984*, a book he had had in mind for several years. Secondly, there was his growing tiredness, not only physical but mental: forty years of conflict had burnt him out.

About the rest there is little to say. His letters from Jura were sparse. And as for his uncomfortable life in the rough Atlantic climate—totally unsuitable for a consumptive—and the accidents through which his health finally broke down, it seemed to me at times as though some force in him were driving him to complete the drama. By an immense and intense effort, working sometimes in bed, he managed to complete *1984*; but, as he admitted, his ill-health was responsible for the shortcomings of the book and at least partly for its excessively pessimistic tone. In 1949 he came South again, now bed-ridden. But he still believed, at least in optimistic moments, that there were some years of work still ahead of him. He fell in love again, and he married for a second time. A short time afterwards, in January 1950, came the abrupt end. The passionate pilgrimage was over.

FROM THE NOTEBOOKS OF GEORGE ORWELL

1940

28.5.40. This is the first day on which newspaper posters are definitely discontinued . . . Half of the front page of the early *Star* devoted to news of the Belgian surrender, the other half to news to the effect that the Belgians are holding out and the King is with them. This is presumably due to paper shortage. Nevertheless, of the early *Star*'s eight pages, six are devoted to racing.

For days past there has been no real news and little possibility of inferring what is really happening. The seeming possibilities were: (i) That the French were really about to counter-attack from the south. (ii) That they hoped to do so, but that the German bombers were making it impossible to concentrate an army. (iii) That the forces in the north were confident of being able to hold on, and it was thought better not to counter-attack till the German attack had spent itself, or (iv) that the position in the north was in reality hopeless and the forces there could only fight their way south, capitulate, be destroyed entirely or escape by sea, probably losing very heavily in the process. Now only the fourth alternative seems possible. The French *communiqués* speak of stabilising the line along the Somme and Aisne, as though the forces cut off in the north did not exist. Horrible though it is, I hope the B.E.F. is cut to pieces sooner than capitulate.

People talk a little more of the war, but very little. As always hitherto, it is impossible to overhear any comments on it in pubs, etc. Last night E. and I went to the pub to hear the 9 o'clock news. The barmaid was not going to have turned it on if we had not asked her, and to all appearances nobody listened.

29.5.40. One has to gather any major news nowadays by means of hints and allusions. The chief sensation last night was that the 9 o'clock news was preceded by a cheer-up talk (quite good) by Duff-Cooper, to sugar the pill, and that Churchill said in his speech that he would report again on the situation some time at the beginning of next week, and that the House

must prepare itself for 'dark and heavy tidings'. This presumably means that they are going to attempt a withdrawal, but whether the 'dark tidings' means enormous casualties, a surrender of part of the B.E.F., or what, nobody knows. Heard the news between acts at a more or less high-brow play at the Torch Theatre. The audience listened a good deal more attentively than would have been the case in a pub.

E. says the people in the Censorship Department where she works lump all 'red' papers together and look on the *Tribune* as being in exactly the same class as the *Daily Worker*. Recently when the *Daily Worker* and *Action* were prohibited from export, one of her fellow-workers asked her, 'Do you know this paper, the *Daily Worker and Action*?'

30.5.40. The B.E.F. are falling back on Dunkirk. Impossible not only to guess how many may get away, but how many are there . . .

Still no evidences of any interest in the war. Yet the by-elections, responses to appeals for men, etc., show what people's feelings are. It is seemingly quite impossible for them to grasp that they are in danger, although there is good reason to think that the invasion of England may be attempted within a few days, and all the papers are saying this. They will grasp nothing until the bombs are dropping. Connolly says they will then panic, but I don't think so.

1.6.40. Last night to Waterloo and Victoria to see whether I could get any news of ———. Quite impossible, of course. The men who have been repatriated have orders not to speak to civilians and are in any case removed from the railway stations as promptly as possible. Actually I saw very few British soldiers, i.e. from the B.E.F., but great numbers of Belgian or French refugees, a few Belgian or French soldiers, and some sailors, including a few naval men. The refugees seemed mostly middling people of the shop-keeper-clerk type, and were in quite good trim, with a certain amount of personal belongings. One family had a parrot in a huge cage. One refugee woman was crying, or nearly so, but most seemed only bewildered by the crowds and the general strangeness. A considerable crowd was watching at Victoria and had to be held back by the police to let the refugees and others get to the street. The refugees were greeted in silence but all sailors of any description enthusiastically cheered. A naval officer, in a uniform that had been in the water and parts of a soldier's equipment, hurried towards a bus, smiling and touching his tin hat to either side as the women shouted at him and clapped him on the shoulder.

Saw a company of Marines marching through the station to entrain for Chatham. Was amazed by their splendid physique and bearing, the tremendous stamp of boots and the superb carriage of the officers, all taking me back to 1914, when all soldiers seemed like giants to me.

2.6.40. Impossible to tell how many men of the B.E.F. have really been repatriated, but statements appearing in various papers suggest that it is about 150,000, and that the number that originally advanced into Belgium was about 300,000. No indication as to how many French troops were with them. There are hints in several papers that it may be intended to hang on to Dunkirk instead of evacuating it completely. This would seem quite impossible without tying down a great number of aeroplanes to that one spot. But if 150,000 have really been removed, it will presumably be possible to remove large numbers more. Italy's entry into the war is now predicted at any time after June 4th, presumably with some kind of peace offer to give it a pretext . . . General expectation that some attempt will now be made to invade England, if only as a diversion, while Germany and Italy endeavour to polish off France. . .

The usual Sunday crowds drifting to and fro, perambulators, cycling clubs, people exercising dogs, knots of young men loitering at street corners, with not an indication in any face or in anything that one can overhear that these people grasp that they are likely to be invaded within a few weeks, though today all the Sunday papers are telling them so. The response to renewed appeals for evacuation of children from London has been very poor. Evidently the reasoning is, 'The air raids didn't happen last time, so they won't happen this time.' Yet these people will behave bravely enough when the time comes, if only they are told what to do.

Rough analysis of advertisements in today's issue of the *People*:

Paper consists of 12 pages—84 columns. Of this, just about $26\frac{1}{2}$ columns (over a quarter) are advertisements. These are divided up as follows:

Food and drink: $5\frac{3}{4}$ columns

Patent medicines: $9\frac{1}{3}$

Tobacco: 1

Gambling: $2\frac{1}{3}$

Clothes: $1\frac{1}{2}$

Miscellaneous: $6\frac{3}{4}$

3.6.40. From a letter from Lady Oxford to the *Daily Telegraph*, on the subject of war economies:

'Since most London houses are deserted, there is little entertaining . . . in any case, most people have to part with their cooks and live in hotels.'

Apparently nothing will ever teach these people that the other 99% of the population exist.

8.6.40. In the middle of a fearful battle in which, I suppose, thousands of men are being killed every day, one has the impression that there is no news. The evening papers are the same as the morning ones, the morning

ones are the same as those of the night before, and the radio repeats what is in the papers. As to truthfulness of news, however, there is probably more suppression than downright lying.

S. said to me recently, 'Don't you feel that any time during the past ten years you have been able to foretell events better than, say, the Cabinet?' I had to agree to this. Partly it is a question of not being blinded by class interests, etc., e.g. anyone not financially interested could see at a glance the strategic danger to England of letting Germany and Italy dominate Spain, whereas many right-wingers, even professional soldiers, simply could not grasp this most obvious fact. But where I feel that people like us understand the situation better than so-called experts is not in any power to foretell specific events, but in the power to grasp what *kind* of world we are living in. At any rate, I have known since about 1931 (Spender says he has known since 1929) that the future must be catastrophic. I could not say exactly what wars and revolutions would happen, but they never surprised me when they came. Since 1934 I have known war between England and Germany was coming, and since 1936 I have known it with complete certainty. I could feel it in my belly, and the chatter of the pacifists on the one hand, and the Popular Front people who pretended to fear that Britain was preparing for war against Russia on the other, never deceived me. Similarly, such horrors as the Russian purges never surprised me, because I had always felt that—not *exactly* that, but something *like* that—was implicit in Bolshevik rule. I could feel it in their literature.

10.6.40. Everything is disintegrating. It makes me writhe to be writing book-reviews, etc., at such a time, and even angers me that such time-wasting should still be permitted. The interview at the War Office on Saturday *may* come to something, if I am clever at faking my way past the doctor. If once in the Army, I know by the analogy of the Spanish war that I shall cease to care about public events. At present I feel as I felt in 1936 when the Fascists were closing in on Madrid, only far worse.

13.6.40. Yesterday to a group conference of the L.D.V., held in the Committee Room at Lord's . . . Last time I was at Lord's must have been at the Eton-Harrow match in 1921. At that time I should have felt that to go into the Pavilion, not being a member of the M.C.C., was on a par with pissing on the altar, and years later would have had some vague idea that it was a legal offence for which you could be prosecuted.

I notice that one of the posters recruiting for the Pioneers, of a foot treading on a swastika with the legend 'Step on it', is cribbed from a Government poster of the Spanish war, i.e. cribbed as to the idea. Of course it is vulgarised and made comic, but its appearance at any rate shows that the Government are beginning to be willing to learn.

The Communist candidate in the Bow by-election got about 500 votes. This is a new depth-record, though the Blackshirts have often got less (in one case about 150). The more remarkable because Bow was Lansbury's seat, and might be expected to contain a lot of pacifists. The whole poll was very low, however.

14.6.40. The Germans are definitely in Paris, one day ahead of schedule. It can be taken as a certainty that Hitler will go to Versailles. Why don't they mine it and blow it up while he is there?

Always, as I walk through the Underground stations, I am sickened by the advertisements, the silly staring faces and strident colours, the general frantic struggle to induce people to waste labour and material by consuming useless luxuries or harmful drugs. How much rubbish this war will sweep away, if only we can hang on throughout the summer. War is simply a reversal of civilised life; its motto is 'Evil be thou my good', and so much of the good of modern life is actually evil that it is questionable whether on balance war does harm.

15.6.40. It has just occurred to me to wonder whether the fall of Paris means the end of the Albatross Library, as I suppose it does. If so, I am £30 to the bad. It seems incredible that people still attach any importance to long-term contracts, stocks and shares, insurance policies, etc., in such times as these. The sensible thing to do now would be to borrow money right and left and buy solid goods. A short while back, E. made enquiries about the hire-purchase terms for sewing machines and found they had agreements stretching over two and a half years.

16.6.40. This morning's papers make it reasonably clear that, at any rate until after the Presidential election, the U.S.A. will not do anything, i.e. will not declare war, which in fact is what matters. For, if the U.S.A. is not actually in the war, there will never be sufficient control of either business or labour to speed up production of armaments. In the last war this was the case even when the U.S.A. was a belligerent.

It is impossible even yet to decide what to do in the case of German conquest of England. The one thing I will not do is to clear out, at any rate not further than Ireland, supposing that to be feasible. If the fleet is intact and it appears that the war is to be continued from America and the Dominions, then one must remain alive if possible, if necessary in the concentration camp. If the U.S.A. is going to submit to conquest as well, there is nothing for it but to die fighting, but one must above all die *fighting* and have the satisfaction of killing somebody else first.

17.6.40. Considerable excitement today over the French surrender, and

people everywhere to be heard discussing it. Usual line, 'Thank God we've got a navy.' A Scottish private, with medals of the last war, partly drunk, making a patriotic speech in a carriage in the Underground, which the other passengers seemed rather to like. Such a rush on evening papers that I had to make four attempts before getting one.

Nowadays, when I write a review, I sit down at the typewriter and type it straight out. Till recently, indeed till six months ago, I never did this and would have said that I could not do it. Virtually all that I wrote was written at least twice, and my books as a whole three times—individual passages as many as five or ten times. It is not really that I have gained in facility, merely that I have ceased to care, so long as the work will pass inspection and bring in a little money. It is a deterioration directly due to the war.

20.6.40. A thought that occurred to me yesterday: how is it that England, with one of the smallest armies in the world, has so many retired Colonels?

I notice that all the 'left' intellectuals I meet believe that Hitler, if he gets here, will take the trouble to shoot people like ourselves and will have very extensive lists of undesirables. C. says there is a move on foot to get our police records (no doubt we all have them) at Scotland Yard destroyed. Some hope!

Thinking always of my island in the Hebrides, which I suppose I shall never possess nor even see. Compton Mackenzie says even now most of the islands are uninhabited (there are 500 of them, only 10 per cent inhabited at normal times), and most have water and a little cultivable land, and goats will live on them. According to R.H., a woman who rented an island in the Hebrides in order to avoid air raids was the first air-raid casualty of the war, the R.A.F. dropping a bomb there by mistake. Good if true.

The first air raid of any consequence on Great Britain the night before last. Fourteen killed, seven German aeroplanes claimed shot down. The papers have photos of three wrecked German planes, so possibly the claim is true.

24.6.40. The German armistice terms are much as expected. . . What is interesting about the whole thing is the extent to which the traditional pattern of loyalties and honour is breaking down. Pétain, ironically enough, is the originator (at Verdun) of the phrase '*ils ne passeront pas*', so long an anti-Fascist slogan. Twenty years ago any Frenchman who would have signed such an armistice would have had to be either an extreme left-winger or an extreme pacifist, and even then there would have been misgivings. Now the people who are virtually changing sides in the middle of the war are the professional patriots. To Pétain, Laval, Flandin and Co., the whole war must have seemed like a lunatic internecine struggle at the moment when your real enemy is waiting to slosh you. . . It is therefore practically

certain that high-up influences in England are preparing for a similar sell-out, and while, e.g. —— is at ——, there is no certainty that they won't succeed even without the invasion of England. The one good thing about the whole business is that the bottom is being knocked out of Hitler's pretence of being the poor man's friend. The people actually willing to do a deal with him are bankers, generals, bishops, kings, big industrialists, etc., etc. . . .

Strategically, all turns upon hanging on until the winter . . . If the invasion happens and fails, all is well, and we shall have a definitely left-wing government and a conscious movement against the governing class. I think, though, people are in error in imagining that Russia would be more friendly towards us if we had a revolutionary government. After Spain, I cannot help feeling that Russia, i.e. Stalin, must be hostile to any country that is genuinely undergoing revolution.

Orders to the L.D.V. that *all* revolvers are to be handed over to the police, as they are needed for the army. Clinging to useless weapons like revolvers, when the Germans have sub-machine guns, is typical of the British Army, but I believe the real reason for the order is to prevent weapons getting into 'the wrong' hands.

Both E. and G. insistent that I should go to Canada if the worst comes to the worst, in order to stay alive and keep up propaganda. I will go if I have some function, e.g. if the government were transferred to Canada and I had some kind of job, but not as a refugee, nor as an expatriate journalist squealing from a safe distance. There are too many of these exiled 'anti-fascists' already. Better to die if necessary, and maybe even as propaganda one's death might achieve more than going abroad and living more or less unwanted on other people's charity. Not that I want to die; I have so much to live for, in spite of poor health and having no children.

Another government leaflet this morning, on treatment of air-raid casualties. The leaflets are getting much better in tone and language, and the broadcasts are also better, especially Duff-Cooper's, which in fact are ideal for anyone down to the £5-a-week level. But there is still nothing in really demotic speech, nothing that will move the poorer working class or even be quite certainly intelligible. Most educated people simply don't realise how little impression abstract words make on the average man.

The first sign that things are really happening in England will be the disappearance of that horrible plummy voice from the radio. Watching in public bars, I have noticed that working men only pay attention to the broadcasts when some bit of demotic speech creeps in. E. however claims, with some truth I think, that uneducated people are often moved by a speech in solemn language which they don't actually understand but feel to be impressive, e.g. Mrs. A. is impressed by Churchill's speeches, though not understanding them word for word.

25.6.40. Went this afternoon to the recruiting office to put my name down for the Home Service Battalions. Have to go again on Friday to be medically examined, but as it is for men from 30 to 50, I suppose the standards are low. The man who took my name, etc., was the usual imbecile, an old soldier with medals of the last war, who could barely write. In writing capital letters, he more than once actually wrote them upside down.

27.6.40. It appears that the night before last, during the air-raid alarm, many people all over London were wakened by the All Clear signal, took that for the warning and went to the shelters and stayed there till morning, waiting for the All Clear. This after ten months of war and God knows how many explanations of the air-raid precautions.

The fact that the government hasn't this time had to do a recruiting campaign has had a deadening effect on propaganda . . . A striking thing is the absence of any propaganda posters of a general kind, dealing with the struggle against Fascism, etc. If only someone would show the M.O.I. the posters used in the Spanish war, even the Franco ones for that matter. But how can these people possibly rouse the nation *against Fascism* when they themselves are subjectively pro-Fascist and were buttering up Mussolini till almost the moment when Italy entered the war?

28.6.40. Horribly depressed by the way things are turning out. Went this morning for my medical board and was turned down, my grade being C., in which they aren't at present taking any men in any corps. . . . What is appalling is the unimaginativeness of a system which can find *no* use for a man who is below the average level of fitness but at least is not an invalid. An army needs an immense amount of clerical work, most of which is done by people who are perfectly healthy and only half-literate. . . One could forgive the government for failing to employ the intelligentsia, who on the whole are politically unreliable, if they were making any attempt to mobilise the man-power of the nation and change people over from the luxury trades to productive work. This simply isn't happening, as one can see by looking down any street.

The Russians entered Bessarabia today. Practically no interest aroused, and the few remarks I could overhear were mildly approving or at least not hostile.

30.6.40. This afternoon a parade in Regent's Park of the L.D.V. of the whole 'zone', i.e. 12 platoons of theoretically about 60 men each (actually a little under strength at present). Predominantly old soldiers and, allowing for the dreadful appearance that men drilling in mufti always present, not a bad lot. Perhaps 25 per cent are working class. If that percentage exists in the Regent's Park area, it must be much higher in some others.

What I do not yet know is whether there has been any tendency to avoid raising L.D.V. contingents in very poor districts where the whole direction would have to be in working-class hands. At present the whole organisation is in an anomalous and confused state, which has many different possibilities. Already people are spontaneously forming local defence squads, and hand-grenades are probably being manufactured by amateurs. The higher-ups are no doubt thoroughly frightened by these tendencies . . . The general inspecting the parade was the usual senile imbecile, actually decrepit, and made one of the most uninspiring speeches I ever heard. The men, however, very ready to be inspired. Loud cheering at the news that rifles have arrived at last.

Yesterday the news of Balbo's death was on the posters as C. and the M.'s and I walked down the street. C. and I thoroughly pleased, C. relating how Balbo and his friends had taken the chief of the Senussi up in an aeroplane and thrown him out, and even the M.'s (all but pure pacifists) were not ill-pleased, I think. E. also delighted. Later in the evening (I spent the night at Crooms Hill) we found a mouse which had slipped down into the sink and could not get up the sides. We went to great pains to make a sort of staircase of boxes of soap flakes, etc., by which it could climb out, but by this time it was so terrified that it fled under the lead strip at the edge of the sink and would not move, even when we left it alone for half an hour or so. In the end E. gently took it out with her fingers and let it go. This sort of thing does not matter. . . . but when I remember how the Thetis disaster upset me, actually to the point of interfering with my appetite, I do think it a dreadful effect of war that one is actually pleased to hear of an enemy submarine going to the bottom.

1.7.40. Newspapers now reduced to 6 pages, i.e. 3 sheets. Print reduced in size. Today's *Express* consists of 6 pages=42 columns, of which 12 are taken up in advertisements.

16.7.40. No real news for some days, except the British government's semi-surrender to Japan, i.e. the agreement to stop sending war supplies along the Burma road for a stated period. This however is not so definite that it could not be revoked by a subsequent government. F. thinks it is the British government's last effort (i.e. the last effort of those with investments in Hong Kong, etc.) to appease Japan, after which they will be driven into definitely supporting China. It may be so. But what a way to do things—never to perform a decent action until you are kicked into it and the rest of the world has ceased to believe that your motives can possibly be honest.

28.7.40. This evening I saw a heron flying over Baker Street. But this is not so improbable as the thing I saw a week or two ago, i.e. a kestrel killing a

sparrow in the middle of Lord's cricket ground. I suppose it is possible that the war, i.e. the diminution of traffic, tends to increase bird life in inner London.

9.8.40. The money situation is becoming completely unbearable. . . . Wrote a long letter to the Income Tax people pointing out that the war had practically put an end to my livelihood, while at the same time the government refused to give me any kind of job. The fact which is really relevant to a writer's position, the impossibility of writing books with this nightmare going on, would have no weight officially. . . . Towards the government I feel no scruples and would dodge paying the tax if I could. Yet I would give my life for England readily enough, if I thought it necessary. No one is patriotic about taxes.

No real news for days past. Only air battles, in which, if the reports are true, the British always score heavily. I wish I could talk to some R.A.F. officer and get some kind of idea whether these reports are truthful.

16.8.40. On Tuesday and Wednesday had two glorious days at Wallington. No newspapers and no mention of the war. They were cutting the oats and we took Marx out both days to help course the rabbits, at which Marx showed unexpected speed. The whole thing took me straight back to my childhood, perhaps the last bit of that kind of life that I shall ever have.

20.8.40. The papers are putting as good a face as possible upon the withdrawal from Somaliland, which is nevertheless a serious defeat, the first loss of British territory for centuries. . .

22.8.40. The Beaverbrook press, compared with the headlines I saw on other papers, seems to be playing down the suggestion that Trotsky's murder was carried out by the G.P.U. In fact today's *Evening Standard*, with several separate items about Trotsky, didn't mention this suggestion. No doubt they still have their eye on Russia and want to placate the Russians at all costs, in spite of Low's cartoons. But under this there may lie a much subtler manœuvre. The men responsible for the *Standard's* present pro-Russian policy are no doubt shrewd enough to know that a Popular Front 'line' is not really the way to secure a Russian alliance. But they also know that the mass of Leftish opinion in England still takes it for granted that a full anti-Fascist policy is the way to line up Russia on our side. To crack up Russia is therefore a way of pushing public opinion leftward. It is curious that I always attribute these devious motives to other people, being anything but cunning myself and finding it hard to use indirect methods even when I see the need for them.

Today in Portman Square saw a four-wheeler cab, in quite good trim, with a good horse and a cabman quite of the pre-1914 type.

23.8.40. Have got my Home Guard uniform, after 2½ months.

Last night to a lecture by General ———, who is in command of about a quarter of a million men. He said he had been 41 years in the army. Was through the Flanders campaign, and no doubt *limogé* for incompetence. Dilating on the Home Guard being a static defensive force, he said contemptuously and in a rather marked way that he saw no use in our practising taking cover, 'crawling about on our stomachs', etc., etc., evidently as a hit at the Osterley Park training school. Our job, he said, was to die at our posts. Was also great on bayonet practice, and hinted that regular army ranks, saluting, etc., were to be introduced shortly. . . These wretched old blimps, so obviously silly and senile, and so degenerate in everything except physical courage, are merely pathetic in themselves, and one would feel rather sorry for them if they were not hanging round our necks like millstones. The attitude of the rank and file at these would-be pep-talks—so anxious to be enthusiastic, so ready to cheer and laugh at the jokes, and yet all the time half feeling that there is something wrong—always strikes me as pathetic. The time has almost arrived when one will only have to jump up on the platform and tell them how they are being wasted and how the war is being lost, and by whom, for them to rise up and shovel the blimps into the dustbin. When I watch them listening to one of these asinine talks, I always remember that passage in Samuel Butler's Notebook about a young calf he once saw eating dung. It could not quite make up its mind whether it liked the stuff or not, and all it needed was some experienced cow to give it a prod with her horn, after which it would have remembered for life that dung is not good to eat.

It occurred to me yesterday, how will the Russian state get on without Trotsky? Or the Communists elsewhere? Probably they will be forced to invent a substitute.

26.8.40. (Greenwich.) The raid which occurred on the 24th was the first real raid on London so far as I am concerned, i.e. the first in which I could hear the bombs. We were watching at the front door when the East India docks were hit. No mention of the docks being hit in Sunday's papers, so evidently they *do* conceal it when important objectives are hit. . .

29.8.40. Air-raid alarms during the last three nights have totalled about 16–18 hours for the three nights . . . E. and I have paid the minimum of attention to raids and I was honestly under the impression that they did not worry me at all except because of the disorganisation, etc., that they cause. This morning, however, putting in a couple of hours' sleep as I always

do when returning from guard duty, I had a very disagreeable dream of a bomb dropping near me and frightening me out of my wits. Cf. the dream I used to have towards the end of our time in Spain, of being on a grass bank with no cover and mortar shells dropping round me.

31.8.40. . . . Later in the night awakened up by a tremendous crash, said to be caused by a bomb in Maida Vale. E. and I merely remarked on the loudness and fell asleep again. Falling asleep, with a vague impression of anti-aircraft guns firing, found myself mentally back in the Spanish war, on one of those nights when you had good straw to sleep on, dry feet, several hours rest ahead of you, and the sound of distant gunfire, which acts as a soporific provided it *is* distant.

1.9.40. Recently bought a forage cap. . . It seems that forage caps over size 7 are a great rarity. Evidently they expect all soldiers to have small heads. This tallies with the remark made by some higher-up to R.R. in Paris when he tried to join the army—'Good God, you don't suppose we want intelligent men in the front line, do you?' All the Home Guard uniforms are made with 20-inch necks. . . Shops everywhere are beginning to cash in on the Home Guard, khaki shirts, etc., being displayed at fantastic prices with notices 'suitable for the Home Guard'. Just as in Barcelona, in the early days when it was fashionable to be in the militia.

10.9.40. Can't write much of the insanities of the last few days. It is not so much that the bombing is worrying in itself as that the disorganisation of traffic, frequent difficulty of telephoning, shutting of shops whenever there is a raid on, etc., etc., combined with the necessity of getting on with one's ordinary work, wear one out and turn life into a constant scramble to catch up lost time.

The delayed-action bombs are a great nuisance, but they appear to be successful in locating most of them and getting all the neighbouring people out until the bomb shall have exploded. All over South London, little groups of disconsolate-looking people wandering about with suitcases and bundles, either people who have been rendered homeless or, in more cases, who have been turned out by the authorities because of an unexploded bomb.

Most of last night in the public shelter, having been driven there by recurrent whistle and crash of bombs not very far away at intervals of about a quarter of an hour. Frightful discomfort owing to overcrowding, though the place was well-appointed, with electric light and fans. People, mostly elderly working class, grousing bitterly about the hardness of the seats and the longness of the night, but no defeatist talk. . .

12.9.40. As soon as the air-raids began seriously, it was noticeable that people were much readier than before to talk to strangers in the street. . . This morning met a youth of about 20, in dirty overalls, perhaps a garage hand. Very embittered and defeatist about the war, and horrified by the destruction he had seen in South London. He spoke bitterly about the people rendered homeless in South London and eagerly took up my point when I said the empty houses in the West End should be requisitioned for them. He considered that all wars were fought for the profit of the rich, but agreed with me that this one would probably end in revolution. With all this, he was not unpatriotic. Part of his grouch was that he had tried to join the Air Force four times in the last six months, and always been put off.

Tonight and last night they have been trying the new device of keeping up a continuous A.A. barrage, apparently firing blind or merely by sound, though I suppose there is some kind of sound detector which estimates the height at which they must make the shells burst. . . The noise is tremendous and almost continuous, but I don't mind it, feeling it to be on my side. Spent last night at S's place with a battery firing in the square at short intervals throughout the night. Slept through it easily enough, no bombs being audible in that place.

The havoc in the East End and South London is terrible, by all accounts.

Meanwhile our platoon of Home Guards, after 3½ months, have about 1 rifle for 6 men, no other weapons except incendiary bombs, and perhaps 1 uniform for 4 men. After all, they have stood out against letting the rifles be taken home by individual men. They are all parked in one place, where a bomb may destroy the whole lot of them any night.

14.9.40. On the first night of the barrage, which was the heaviest, they are said to have fired 500,000 shells, i.e. at an average cost of £5 per shell, £2½ millions worth. But well worth it, for the effect on morale.

15.9.40. This morning, for the first time, saw an aeroplane shot down. It fell slowly out of the clouds, nose foremost, just like a snipe that has been shot high overhead. Terrific jubilation among the people watching, punctuated every now and then by the question, 'Are you sure it's a German?' So puzzling are the directions given, and so many the types of aeroplane, that no one even knows which are German planes and which are our own. My only test is that if a bomber is seen over London it must be a German, whereas a fighter is likelier to be ours.

17.9.40. Yesterday, when having my hair cut in the City, asked the barber if he carried on during raids. He said he did. And even if he was shaving someone? I said. Oh, yes, he carried on just the same. And one day a bomb

will drop near enough to make him jump, and he will slice half somebody's face off.

Later, accosted by a man, I should think some kind of commercial traveller, with a bad type of face, while I was waiting for a bus. He began a rambling talk about how he was getting himself and his wife out of London, how his nerves were giving way and he suffered from stomach trouble, etc., etc. I don't know how much of this kind of thing there is. . . There has of course been a big exodus from the East End, and every night what amount to mass migrations to places where there is sufficient shelter accommodation. The practice of taking a 2d. ticket and spending the night in one of the deep Tube stations, e.g. Piccadilly, is growing. . .

(Evening.) Almost impossible to write in this infernal racket. (Electric lights have just gone off. Luckily I have some candles.) So many streets in (lights on again) the quarter roped off because of unexploded bombs, that to get home from Baker Street, say 300 yards, is like trying to find your way to the heart of a maze.

21.9.40. Have been unable for some days to buy another volume to continue this diary, because, of the three or four stationers' shops in the immediate neighbourhood, all but one are cordoned off because of unexploded bombs.

Regular features of the time: neatly swept-up piles of glass, litter of stone and splinters of flint, smell of escaping gas, knots of sightseers waiting at the cordons.

Yesterday, at the entry to a street near here, a little crowd waiting with an A.R.P. man in a black tin hat among them. A devastating roar, with a huge cloud of dust, etc. The man with the black hat comes running towards the A.R.P. headquarters, where another with a white hat is emerging munching at a mouthful of bread and butter.

The man with the black hat: 'Dorset Square, sir.'

The man with the white hat: 'O.K'. (Makes a tick in his note-book.)

Nondescript people wandering about, having been evacuated from their houses because of delayed-action bombs. Yesterday two girls stopping me in the street, very elegant in appearance except that their faces were filthily dirty: 'Please, sir, can you tell us where we are?'

Withal, huge areas of London almost normal, and everyone quite happy in the daytime, never seeming to think about the coming night, like animals which are unable to foresee the future so long as they have a bit of food and a place in the sun.

24.9.40. Oxford Street yesterday, from Oxford Circus up to the Marble Arch, completely empty of traffic, and only a few pedestrians, with the late afternoon sun shining straight down the empty roadway and glittering

on innumerable fragments of broken glass. Outside John Lewis's, a pile of plaster dress models, very pink and realistic, looking so like a pile of corpses that one could have mistaken them for that at a little distance. Just the same sight in Barcelona, only there it was plaster saints from desecrated churches.

15.10.40. Writing this at Wallington, having been more or less ill for about a fortnight with a poisoned arm. Not much news—i.e. only events of world-wide importance; nothing that has much affected me personally.

There are now 11 evacuee children in Wallington (12 arrived, but one ran away and had to be sent home). They come from the East End. One little girl, from Stepney, said that her grandfather had been bombed out seven times. They seem nice children and to be settling down quite well. Nevertheless there are the usual complaints against them in some quarters, e.g. of the little boy who is with Mrs. ———, aged seven: 'He's a dirty little devil, he is. He wets his bed and dirties his breeches. I'd rub his nose in it if I had charge of him, the dirty little devil.'

19.10.40. The unspeakable depression of lighting the fires every morning with papers of a year ago, and getting glimpses of optimistic headlines as they go up in smoke.

29.12.40. From a newspaper account of a raid (not ironical): 'Bombs were falling like manna.'

1941

2.1.41. The right-wing reaction is now in full swing, and Margesson's entry into the Cabinet is no doubt a deliberate cash-in on Wavell's victory in Egypt. Comically enough a review of Wavell's life of Allenby, which I wrote some months ago, was printed in *Horizon* just at the time when the news of Sidi Barrani came through. I said in the review that, as Wavell held so important a command, the chief interest of the book was the light that it threw on his own intellect, and left it to be inferred that I didn't think much of this. So the laugh was on me—though, God knows, I am glad enough to have been wrong.

The word 'blitz' now used everywhere to mean any kind of attack on anything. Cf. 'strafe' in the last war. 'Blitz' is not yet used as a verb, a development I am expecting.

22.1.41. ——— is convinced, perhaps rightly, that the danger of the People's Convention racket is much underestimated and that one must fight back and not ignore it. He says that thousands of simple-minded

people are taken in by the appealing programme of the People's Convention and do not realise that it is a defeatist manœuvre intended to help Hitler. He quoted a letter from the Dean of Canterbury who said 'I want you to understand that I am wholeheartedly for winning the war, and that I believe Winston Churchill to be the only possible leader for us till the war is over' (or words to that effect), and nevertheless supported the People's Convention. It appears that there are thousands like this.

Apropos of what ——— says, it is at any rate a fact that the People's Convention crew have raised a lot of money from somewhere. Their posters are everywhere, also a lot of new ones from the *Daily Worker*. The space has not been paid for, but even so, the printing, etc., would cost a good deal. Yesterday I ripped down a number of these posters, the first time I have ever done such a thing. Cf. in the summer when I chalked up 'Sack Chamberlain', etc., and in Barcelona, after the suppression of the POUM, when I chalked up '*Visca POUM*'. At any normal time it is against my instincts to write on a wall or to interfere with what anyone else has written.

The onion shortage has made everyone intensely sensitive to the smell of onions. A quarter of an onion shredded into a stew seems exceedingly strong. E. the other day knew as soon as I kissed her that I had eaten onions some six hours earlier.

An instance of the sort of racketeering that goes on when any article whose price is not controlled becomes scarce—the price of alarm clocks. The cheapest now obtainable are 15s.—these the sort of rubbishy German-made clocks which used to sell for 3s. 6d. The little tin French ones which used to sell for 5s. are now 18s. 6d., and all others at corresponding prices.

The *Daily Express* has used 'blitz' as a verb.

This morning's news—the defences of Tobruk pierced, and the *Daily Worker* suppressed. Only very doubtfully pleased about the latter.

26.1.41. Allocation of space in this week's *New Statesman*: Fall of Tobruk (with 20,000 prisoners)—2 lines. Suppression of the *Daily Worker* and the *Week*—108 lines.

7.2.41. There is now more and more division of opinion—the question is implicit from the start but people have only recently became aware of it—as to whether we are fighting the Nazis or the German people. This is bound up with the question of whether England should declare her war aims, or, indeed, have any war aims. All of what one might call respectable opinion is against giving the war any meaning whatever ('Our job is to beat the Boche—that's the only war aim worth talking about'), and this is probably bound to become official policy as well. Vansittart's 'hate Germany' pamphlet is said to be selling like hot cakes.

No definite news from France. It is obvious that Pétain will give in about taking Laval into the Cabinet. Then there will be a fresh to-do about the passage of troops through unoccupied France, bases in Africa, etc., another 'firm stand', and then more giving in. The thing that British Conservatives *will not* understand is that the forces of the right have no strength in them and exist only to be knocked down.

14.3.41. For the last few days there have been rumours everywhere, also hints in the papers, that 'something is going to happen' in the Balkans, i.e. that we are going to send an expeditionary force to Greece. If so, it must presumably be the army now in Libya, or the bulk of it. I had heard a month back that Metaxas before he died asked us for 10 divisions and we offered him 4. It seems a terribly dangerous thing to risk an army anywhere west of the Straits.

It would be an appalling disaster if, while our main force was bogged in Salonika, the Germans managed to cross the sea from Sicily and win back all the Italians have lost. Everyone who thinks of the matter is torn both ways.

20.3.41. Looking back through this diary, I see that of late I have written in it at much longer intervals and much less about public events than when I started it. The feeling of helplessness is growing in everyone. One feels that the necessary swing of opinion cannot now happen except at the price of another disaster, which we cannot afford and which therefore one dare not hope for.

On a wall in South London some Communist or Blackshirt had chalked 'Cheese, not Churchill'. What a silly slogan. It sums up the psychological ignorance of these people who even now have not grasped that, whereas some people would die for Churchill, nobody will die for cheese.

23.3.41. Yesterday attended a more or less compulsory Home Guard church parade, to take part in the national day of prayer. There were also contingents of the A.F.S., Air Force cadets, W.A.A.Fs, etc., etc. Appalled by the jingoism and self-righteousness of the whole thing. . . I am not shocked by the Church condoning war, as many people profess to be—nearly always people who are not religious believers themselves, I notice. If you accept government, you accept war, and if you accept war, you must in most cases desire one side or the other to win. I can never work up any disgust over bishops blessing the colours of regiments, etc. All that kind of thing is founded on a sentimental idea that fighting is incompatible with loving your enemies. Actually you can only love your enemies if you are willing to kill them in certain circumstances. But what is disgusting about services like these is the absence of any kind of self-criticism. Apparently

God is expected to help us on the ground that we are *better* than the Germans. In the set prayer composed for the occasion God is asked 'to turn the hearts of our enemies, and to help us to forgive them; to give them repentance for their misdoings, and a readiness to make amends.' Nothing about our enemies forgiving *us*. It seems to me that the Christian attitude would be that we are no better than our enemies—we are all miserable sinners, but that it so happens that it would be better if our cause prevailed and therefore that it is legitimate to pray for this . . . I suppose the idea is that it would be bad for morale to let people realise that the enemy has a case, though even that is a psychological error, in my opinion. But perhaps they aren't thinking primarily about the effect on the people taking part in the service but are simply looking for direct results from their nation-wide praying campaign, a sort of box barrage fired at the angels.

8.4.41. Have just read *The Battle of Britain*, the M.O.I.'s best-seller (there was so great a run on it that copies were unprocurable for some days). I suppose it is not as bad as it might be, but seeing that it is being translated into many languages and will undoubtedly be read all over the world—it is the first official account, at any rate in English, of the first great air battle in history—it is a pity that they did not have the sense to avoid the propagandist note altogether. The pamphlet is full of 'heroic', 'glorious exploits', etc., and the Germans are spoken of more or less slightingly. Why couldn't they simply give a cold, accurate account of the facts which, after all, are favourable enough? For the sake of the bit of cheer-up that this pamphlet will accomplish in England, they throw away the chance of producing something that would be accepted all over the world as a standard authority and used to counteract German lies.

But what chiefly impresses me when reading *The Battle of Britain* and looking up the corresponding dates in this diary, is the way in which 'epic' events never seem very important at the time. Actually I have a number of vivid memories of the day the Germans broke through and fired the docks (I think it must have been the 7th September), but mostly of trivial things. First of all, riding down in the bus to have tea with Connolly, and two women in front of me insisting that shell-bursts in the sky were parachutes, till I had a hard job of it not to chip in and correct them. Then sheltering in a doorway in Piccadilly from falling shrapnel, just as one might shelter from a cloudburst. Then a long line of German planes filing across the sky, and some very young R.A.F. and naval officers running out of one of the hotels and passing a pair of field glasses from hand to hand. Then sitting in Connolly's top-floor flat and watching the enormous fires beyond St. Paul's, and the great plume of smoke from an oil drum somewhere down the river, and Humphrey Slater sitting in the window and saying, 'It's just like Madrid—quite nostalgic.' The only person suitably

impressed was Connolly, who took us up to the roof and, after gazing for some time at the fires, said 'It's the end of capitalism. It's a judgment on us.' I didn't feel this to be so, but was chiefly struck by the size and beauty of the flames. That night I was wakened by the explosions and actually went out into the street to see if the fires were still alight—as a matter of fact, it was almost as bright as day, even in the N.W. quarter—but still didn't feel as though any important historical event were happening. Afterwards, when the attempt to conquer England by air bombardment had evidently been abandoned, I said to Fyvel, 'That was Trafalgar. Now there's Austerlitz', but I hadn't seen this analogy at the time.

12.4.41. The day before yesterday saw fresh-water fish (perch) for sale in a fishmonger's shop. A year ago English people, i.e. town people, wouldn't have touched such a thing.

13.4.41. When the campaign in the Near East is settled one way or the other, and the situation is in some way stabilised, I shall discontinue this diary. It covers the period between Hitler's spring campaigns of 1940 and 1941. Some time within the next month or two a new military and political phase must begin. The first six months of this diary covered the quasi-revolutionary period following on the disaster in France. Now we are evidently in for another period of disaster, but of a different kind, less intelligible to ordinary people and not necessarily producing any corresponding political improvement. Looking back to the early part of this diary, I see how my political predictions have been falsified, and yet, as it were, the revolutionary changes that I expected *are* happening, but in slow motion. I made an entry, I see, implying that private advertisements would have disappeared from the walls within a year. They haven't, of course—that disgusting Cough Syrup advert. is still plastered all over the place, also He's Twice The Man On Worthington and Somebody's Mother Isn't Using Persil—but they are far fewer, and the government posters far more numerous. Connolly said once that intellectuals tend to be right about the direction of events but wrong about their tempo, which is very true.

Registering on Saturday, with the 38 group, I was appalled to see what a scrubby-looking lot they were. A thing that strikes one when one sees a group like this, picked out simply by date of birth, is how much more rapidly the working classes age. They don't, however, live less long, or only a few years less long, than the middle class. But they have an enormous middle age, stretching from thirty to sixty.

22.4.41. Have been 2 or 3 days at Wallington. Saturday night's blitz could easily be heard there—45 miles distant.

Sowed while at Wallington 40 or 50 lb. of potatoes, which might give 200 to 600 lb. according to the season, etc. It would be queer—I hope it won't be so, but it quite well may—if, when this autumn comes, those potatoes seem a more important achievement than all the articles, broadcasts, etc. I shall have done this year.

28.4.41. Churchill's speech last night very good, as a speech. But impossible to dig any information out of it. The sole solid fact I could extract was that, at the time of his offensive in Libya, Wavell could never concentrate more than 2 divisions, say 30,000 men. Heard the speech at the Home Guard post. The men impressed by it, in fact moved. But I think only two of the ones there were men below the £5-a-week level. Churchill's oratory is really good, in an old-fashioned way, though I don't like his delivery. What a pity that he either can't, or doesn't want, or isn't allowed, ever to say anything definite!

6.5.41. Astonishing sights in the Tube stations when one goes through late at night. What is most striking is the cleanly, normal, domesticated air that everything now has. Especially the young married couples, the sort of homely, cautious types that would probably be buying their houses from a building society, tucked up together under pink counterpanes. And the large families one sees here and there, father, mother and several children all laid out in a row like rabbits on the slab.

18.5.41. Yesterday or the day before on the newspaper placards, 'Nazis using Syrian air bases', and reports in the paper that when this fact was announced in Parliament there were cries of 'Shame!' Apparently there are people capable of being surprised when the armistice terms are broken and the French empire made use of by the Nazis. And yet any mere outsider like myself could see on the day France went out of the war that this would happen.

31.5.41. Still not quite happy about Abyssinia. Saw today the news-reel of the South African troops marching into Addis Ababa. At the Emperor's palace (or whatever the building was) the Union Jack was hauled up first and only afterwards the Abyssinian flag.

1.6.41. We are clearing out of Crete. Mention of 13,000 men being evacuated. No mention yet of the total number involved. The most frightful impression will be created if we remove the British troops and leave the Greeks behind, though from a cold-blooded military point of view it might be the right thing to do.

The British are in Baghdad. It would be even better to hear they were in

Damascus. One knows in advance that we shall not make sufficiently harsh terms with the Irakis, i.e. shall not make possession of the oil-wells a condition of granting them an armistice.

8.6.41. The British entered Syria this morning.

14.6.41. Complete mystery, about which no one has any real news, surrounds the state of affairs between Russia and Germany. Cannot yet make contact with anyone who has seen Cripps since his return.

19.6.41. Non-aggression pact between Germany and Turkey. This is our reward for not mopping up Syria quickly. From now on the Turkish press will be turned against us, and this will have its effect on the Arab peoples.

The Derby was run yesterday, at Newmarket, and apparently attended by enormous crowds. Even the *Daily Express* was derisive about this. The *Evening Standard* has been declaring that Hitler must invade Britain within 80 days and suggesting that the manœuvres in eastern Europe are probably a mask for this—but this, I think, with the idea of frightening people into working harder.

The British government has ceased issuing navicerts to Petsamo, and stopped three Finnish ships, on the ground that Finland is now for all purposes enemy-occupied territory. This is the most definite indication yet that something is really happening between Russia and Germany.

20.6.41. We have all been in a semi-melting condition for some days past. It struck me that one minor benefit of this war is that it has broken the newspapers of their idiotic habit of making headline news out of yesterday's weather.

22.6.41. The Germans invaded the U.S.S.R. this morning. Everyone greatly excited. It is universally assumed that this development is to our advantage. It is only so, however, if the Russians actually intend to fight back and can put up a serious resistance, if not enough to halt the Germans, at any rate enough to wear down their air force and navy. Evidently the immediate German objective is not either territory or oil, but simply to wipe out the Russian air force and thus remove a danger from their rear while they deal finally with England. Impossible to guess what kind of show the Russians can put up. The worst omen is that the Germans would probably not have attempted this unless certain that they can bring it off, and quite rapidly at that.

23.6.41. Churchill's speech in my opinion very good. It will not please the Left, but they forget that he has to speak to the whole world, e.g., to Middle

Western Americans, airmen and naval officers, disgruntled shopkeepers and farmers, and also the Russians themselves, as well as to the left-wing political parties. His hostile references to Communism were entirely right, and simply emphasised the fact that this offer of help was sincere. One can imagine the squeal that will be raised over these by correspondents in the *New Statesman*, etc. What sort of impression do they think it would make if Stalin stood up and announced 'I have always been a convinced supporter of capitalism'?

Impossible to guess what impression this move of Hitler's will make in the U.S.A. The idea that it will promptly bring into being a strong pro-Nazi party in England is a complete error. There are no doubt wealthy people who would like to see Hitler destroy the Soviet régime, but they will be a small minority. The Catholics will certainly be among them, but will probably be too acute to show their hands until Russian resistance begins to break down. Talking to people in the Home Guard, including blimps and quite wealthy business men, I find everyone completely pro-Russian, though much divided in opinion about the Russian capacity to resist. Typical conversation, recorded as well as I can remember it:

WHOLESALE POULTERER: 'Well, I hope the Russians give them a bloody good hiding.'

CLOTHING MANUFACTURER: 'They won't. They'll go to pieces, just like last time. You'll see.'

DOCTOR (some kind of foreigner, perhaps refugee): 'You're absolutely wrong. Everyone's under-rated the strength of Russia. They'll wipe the floor with the Nazis.'

WHOLESALE GROCER: 'Damn it, there's two hundred bloody millions of them.'

CLOTHING MANUFACTURER: 'Yes, but they're not organised', etc., etc., etc.

All spoken in ignorance, but showing what people's sentiments are. Three years ago the great majority of people above £1,000 a year, or even about £6 a week, would have sided with the Germans as against the Russians. By this time, however, hatred of Germany has made them forget everything else.

At present the British Communists have issued some kind of manifesto calling for a 'People's Government', etc., etc. They will change their tune as soon as the hand-out from Moscow comes. If the Russians are really resisting, it is not in their interest to have a weak government in Britain, or subversive influences at work here. The Communists will no doubt be super-patriotic within ten days—the slogan will probably be 'All power to Churchill'—and completely disregarded. But if the alliance between the two countries is genuine, with a certain amount of give-and-take, the internal political effects on both sides must be all for the best. The special

circumstances which made the Russian military assistance a bad influence in Spain don't exist here.

3.7.41. Stalin's broadcast speech is a direct return to the Popular Front, defence of democracy line, and in effect a complete contradiction of all that he and his followers have been saying for the past two years. It was nevertheless a magnificent fighting speech, just the right counterpart to Churchill's, and made it clear that no compromise is intended, at any rate at this moment. Passages in it seemed to imply that a big retreat is contemplated, however. Britain and the U.S.A. referred to in friendly terms and more or less as allies, though apparently no formal alliance exists as yet. Ribbentrop and Co. spoken of as 'cannibals', which *Pravda* has also been calling them. Apparently one reason for the queer phraseology that translated Russian speeches often have is that Russian contains so large a vocabulary of abusive words that English equivalents do not exist.

One could not have a better example of the moral and emotional shallowness of our time, than the fact that we are now all more or less pro-Stalin. This disgusting murderer is temporarily on our side, and so the purges, etc., are suddenly forgotten. So also with Franco, Mussolini, etc., should they ultimately come over to us. The most one can truly say for Stalin is that probably he is individually sincere, as his followers cannot be, for his endless changes of front are at any rate his own decision. It is a case of 'when father turns, we all turn', and father presumably turns because the spirit moves him.

6.7.41. Several of the papers are growing very restive because we are not doing more to help the U.S.S.R. I do not know whether any action, other than air-raids, is really intended, but if nothing is attempted, quite apart from the military and political consequences this may have, it is a disquieting symptom.

Examined a number of Catholic papers, also several copies of *Truth*, to see what their attitude is to our quasi-alliance with the U.S.S.R. The Catholic papers have not gone pro-Nazi, and perhaps will not do so. The 'line' apparently is that Russia is objectively on our side and must be supported, but that there must be no definite alliance. *Truth*, which hates Churchill, takes much the same line but is a shade more anti-Russian, perhaps. Some of the Irish Catholic papers have now gone frankly pro-Nazi, it appears. If that is so, there will have been similar repercussions in the U.S.A.

The People's Convention have voted full support for the government and demand 'vigorous prosecution of the war'—this only a fortnight after they were demanding a 'people's peace'. The story is going round that, when the news of Hitler's invasion of Russia reached a New York café

where some Communists were talking, one of them who had gone out to the lavatory returned to find that the 'party line' had changed in his absence.

28.8.41. I am now definitely an employee of the B.B.C.

The line on the Eastern front, in so far as there is a line, now runs roughly Tallin, Gomel, Smolensk, Kiev, Dnepropetrovsk, Kherson. The Germans have occupied an area which must be larger than Germany, but have not destroyed the Russian Armies. The British and Russians invaded Iran 3 days ago and the Iranians have already packed up. No rumours that one can take hold of about movements of troops in this country. They have only about a month now in which to start something on the continent, and I don't believe they intend anything of the kind. Beneath the terms of the Churchill-Roosevelt declaration one can read that American anti-Hitler feeling has cooled off as a result of the invasion of the U.S.S.R. On the other hand, there is no sign that willingness to endure sacrifices, etc., in this country has increased because of it. There are still popular complaints because we are not doing enough to help the U.S.S.R., but their whole volume is tiny. I think the Russian campaign can be taken as settled in the sense that Hitler cannot break through to the Caucasus and the Middle East this winter, but that he is not going to collapse and that he has inflicted more damage than he has received. There is no victory in sight at present. We are in for a long, dreary, exhausting war, with everyone growing poorer all the time. The new phase which I foresaw earlier has now started, and the quasi-revolutionary period which began with Dunkirk is finished. I therefore bring this diary to an end, as I intended to do when the new phase started.

'BURMESE DAYS'

MALCOLM MUGGERIDGE

GEORGE ORWELL'S *Burmese Days* is based, of course, on his own experiences in the Burma Police in the years after he left Eton—that is in the early twenties. There can be no doubt that this experience played a great part in his life. His family had close connections with India; he was born in Bengal, where his father was an official in the Opium Department. One day an attempt will doubtless be made, coolly and objectively, to analyse the effect on the English of their association with India. It is a fascinating subject, and whoever undertakes dealing with it will have plenty of data in works of fiction, from *Vanity Fair* to *Plain Tales from the Hills* or *A Passage to India*. *Burmese Days* belongs essentially to this tradition. It is a study of the human factor in the British Raj.

Considered simply as a novel, *Burmese Days* is not particularly satisfactory. Most of the characters are stock figures, and most of the dialogue is intended rather to present them as such than to reproduce actual conversation. The hero, Flory, is scarcely convincing, nor is the Deputy District Commissioner, Macgregor. Oddly enough, it is the villain, the fat, wicked, Burmese magistrate, U Po Sing, who best comes to life. In his portrayal there is real zest; his wickedness is presented with almost sensual delight, rather in the manner, though in a very different context, of Graham Greene.

The ordinarily-accepted view is that Orwell was deeply revolted by what was expected of him as a member of the Burma Police Force, and that his subsequent political views were to some extent a consequence of the great revulsion of feeling thereby induced in him. Personally, I consider that this is an over-simplification. It is perfectly true that Orwell was revolted by the brutality necessarily involved in police duties in Burma, as he was revolted by all forms of brutality, and, indeed, to a certain extent, by authority as such; but it is also true that there was a Kiplingesque side to his character which made him romanticise the Raj and its mystique.

In this connection, it is significant that one of the most vivid descriptive passages in *Burmese Days* is of the hunting expedition that Flory went on with Elizabeth. Another is of the attack on a small handful of Englishmen in their club by an enraged Burmese mob. Flory was the hero of this occasion. He, with his defacing birthmark and unorthodox attitude towards the 'natives', saved the situation, whereas Verrall, 'lieutenant the honourable', polo player, handsome and insolent Sahib—a sort of Steerforth as in *David Copperfield* or Townley as in *The Way of All Flesh*—unaccountably failed to put in an appearance.

These two episodes are described with tremendous gusto and vividness, and alone give promise of the considerable writer Orwell was to become. Even Flory's passion for Elizabeth, which has up to that point been difficult to believe in, comes to life when they are hunting together. Their hands meet by the warm carcase of a jungle cock—'For a moment they knelt with their hands clasped together. The sun blazed upon them and the warmth breathed out of their bodies; they seemed to be floating upon clouds of heat and joy.'

On the other hand, the description of the Europeans in their club, of their discussions about electing a 'native' to membership, their quarrels and their drunkenness and their outbursts of hysteria, is somehow unreal. As it happens, I was myself living in India at the same period as Orwell was in Burma. It was my first visit there. I was teaching at an Indian college in Travancore, and occasionally used to visit a neighbouring town where there was a little community of English living rather the same sort of life as the European community in Kyauktada. It is, of course, perfectly true that the general attitude towards Indians was arrogant, and sometimes brutal, and that a European who did not share this attitude was liable, like Flory, to find himself in an embarrassing situation. On the other hand, it is equally true that Orwell's picture is tremendously exaggerated, and even unreal—the sadistic outburst of Ellis, for instance:

> 'If it pleases you to go to Murkhaswami's house and drink whisky with all his nigger pals, that's your look-out. Do what you like outside the Club. But by God, it's a different matter when you talk of bringing niggers in here. I suppose you'd like little Murkhaswami for a Club member, eh? Chipping into our conversation and pawing everyone with his sweaty hands and breathing his filthy garlic breath in our faces. By God, he'd go out with my boot behind him if ever I saw his black snout inside that door. Greasy, pot-bellied little . . . !'

The fact is, it seems to me, that a tremendous struggle went on inside Orwell between one side of his character, a sort of Brushwood Boy side, which made him admire the insolence and good looks of Verrall, and a deep intellectual disapprobation of everything Verrall stood for. Verrall is presented by Orwell as, in some ways, a far more admirable character than

Flory, in whom there are, unquestionably, strong autobiographical elements. Verrall is what he is; but Flory is tormented by doubt, finds his secret solace in the companionship of Dr. Murkhaswami, an Indian, and, at the same time, repeats to him gross remarks made at the club about 'filthy niggers', and feels bound to sign a defamatory notice about him in connection with a proposal that he should be admitted to the club. The same conflict existed in Kipling, who, however, settled it by coming down very heavily on the Brushwood Boy side. Orwell settled it the other way, and came down heavily on the side of Paget, M.P., and 'anti-imperialism'. Yet, in both Kipling and Orwell the conflict really remained unresolved, leading Kipling to make the hero of his best book, *Kim*, a little English boy 'gone native', and Orwell to present Verrall and U Po Sing, the two extremes of European and native callousness, as the most effective, if not the most lovable, characters in *Burmese Days*.

Orwell had an immense admiration for Kipling as a writer, though of course he deplored much of the content of his writing. His long essay on Kipling is extremely interesting, and far from being wholly denigratory. When I used sometimes to say to Orwell that he and Kipling had a great deal in common, he would laugh that curious rusty laugh of his and change the subject. One thing, incidentally, they indubitably had in common was that they found it easier to present animals than human beings in a sympathetic light; the *Jungle Books* and *Animal Farm* are cases in point. As Hugh Kingsmill remarked of Orwell, he tended only to write sympathetically about human beings when he regarded them as animals.

Burmese Days, as I have said, is not on any showing a great novel. It is, however, extremely readable and, in some of its descriptive passages, brilliant. The sense, if not the manner, of living in India is wonderfully conveyed—the boredom, the hatefulness, and, at the same time, the curious passionate glory of it. Anyone who believed that that was literally how Europeans lived in Burma before the country was 'liberated', and relapsed into its present squalor and chaos and misery, would be hopelessly mistaken. There is much more to be said for British rule than Orwell says; much more that was heroic even about those little remote philistine collections of English in up-country stations than he suggests. At the same time, *Burmese Days* has its own verisimilitude, but more in relation to Orwell than to India as such.

Events have moved fast indeed since he wrote the book, and the pretentious clubs, which both U Po Sing and Dr. Murkhaswami so passionately desired to be allowed to join, have already for the most part ceased to exist, or become the haunts of brown burra Sahibs not less concerned than their white predecessors to maintain their position of superiority. If the copies of *The Tatler*, *The Illustrated London News*, along with local equivalents, remain where they were, and are still turned over, the

Ellises, the Latimers, the Macgregors, the Westfields, have either departed, or adjusted themselves to a position of obsequiousness to their new masters. My impression was very strongly that Orwell was not quite sure how pleased he was about all this. In any case, it makes the scene of *Burmese Days* as much a period piece as Lytton's *Last Days of Pompeii.*

'THE ROAD TO WIGAN PIER'

JOHN BEAVAN

ORWELL'S quest for the worker was a failure. He never attained a deep understanding of the ordinary English wage-earner and his aspirations; and he never appreciated, therefore, the virtues of the Labour Party and the Trade Union movement which fulfil so successfully the English wage-earner's needs. But he saw their weaknesses clearly. Orwell is remembered today as a superb critic of Communism. He was more than that. He was concerned with the mental and moral health of the entire Left. He was a Lollard of social democracy, a preacher of the pure faith at war with the corruption and hypocrisy of the Church.

Socialism for him was the fight against tyranny; and the great need of its institutions, as he saw it, was to humanise themselves and make a broad appeal to all good men. It is as a great critic of Socialism that Orwell will be remembered, not as the Socialist missionary he would have liked to be.

* * *

It was Orwell's acute personal problems that stood between him and an understanding of the worker, and he revealed them in two terribly frank chapters of *The Road to Wigan Pier* which the Left Book Club published in 1947. It is his worst book, but it must be read by all who would understand this strange and saintly man.

He was born into a middle-class family (he is curiously vague about its income). He won a scholarship to Eton, where he seems to have felt his comparative poverty keenly. When the Great War ended, the boys of even this lordly school were touched by the general mood of disillusionment and pacifism. Orwell was, of course, affected, and became vaguely Socialist. After school he spent five years as a policeman in Burma and then, during his home leave, decided not to go back.

He had come, he says, to loathe the machinery of justice and to believe that the criminal is morally superior to the hanging judge. In Burma the oppression was a double one for the guardians of law were 'unwanted foreign invaders'. Back in England, Orwell was haunted by the faces of the wronged, the men in gaol awaiting death, or those coolies whom he had bullied or struck. 'I was conscious of an immense weight of guilt that I had got to expiate . . . I wanted to submerge myself, to get right down among the oppressed, to be one of them and on their side against the tyrants. And chiefly, because I had to think out everything in solitude, I had carried my hatred of oppression to extraordinary lengths. At that time failure seemed to me to be the only virtue . . . It was in this way that my thoughts turned to the English working class.'

He was drawn towards the social outcasts—tramps, beggars, criminals, prostitutes. 'Once I had been . . . accepted by them . . . part of my guilt would drop from me.' Orwell became a tramp and begged his bread. He later realised that outcasts were only a sub-section of the working-class and so he went to live in an industrial community, hoping to break down the class barrier he felt to exist between himself and the mass of mankind. Orwell was by this time a writer and therefore a professional student of society; but the search was still a personal one. He attacked the class barrier at its thickest and highest point. He tried to get into the manual working-class and into a very special section of it—the miners. He chose, moreover, a sub-section of the miners—those out of work; and he chose a sub-section of the unemployed: those who lived in the worst slums. Had the choice been wholly a rational one, a man of Orwell's background would have got a job as a clerk, lodged with the tidy wife of a railwayman or a spinner, joined a trade union and spent his Saturdays at the football match, and his holidays in a Blackpool company house. In such a job, even with his middle-class accent (it was not very noticeable), he would have been accepted and he would have learned something from the inside of the worker's enormous zest for life, the richness of his humour, the breadth of his ambitions, and the simple philosophy which sustains him so long in adversity. But the barrier here was too low. There was no expiation to be found along this easy path.

* * *

The other chapter helps to make Orwell's plight clearer. He had a remarkable belief that the real secret of class distinction in the West was summed up in four words that were often spoken in his childhood: 'The lower classes smell.' As a child he was conditioned to feel that there was 'something subtly repulsive about the working class body.'

His favourite horror was to imagine himself drinking from a bottle after a navvy. Even as a man in Burma, he was nauseated by the 'lower-class' sweat of British private soldiers. Orwell's physical sensitiveness is by no

means rare; but surely he was confusing a personal problem with a social one, and was wrong in supposing his attitude to be universal among his class. Yet he assumed that it was shared 'by everyone who has grown up pronouncing his aitches and in a house with a bathroom and one servant.' He overcame his aversion only by 'rubbing shoulders with tramps.' He writes: 'When you have shared a bed with a tramp and drunk tea out of the same snuff tin, you feel that you have seen the worst and the worst has no terrors for you.' The resemblance of the story to Flaubert's *conte St. Julien l'Hospitalier* leaps to mind.

* * *

Orwell's real problem was, of course, deeper than this, and *The Road to Wigan Pier* gives a glimpse of it. As a child he was taught that the poor were dirty and immoral, and he was denied their society, though they seemed to him to be the most interesting and friendly of people. He never quite got over this. He had still in 1937 the extraordinary belief that there were class differences in basic moral beliefs. 'All my notions of good and evil, of pleasant and unpleasant, of funny and serious, of ugly and beautiful, are essentially middle-class notions.' Nothing in the book makes it more obvious that, though he went to extreme lengths in his revolt, he never freed himself from the parental teaching. One does not want to build up an elaborate psychological case on such fragmentary data as are in this book, but it does seem to give a rough indication of Orwell's more fundamental difficulties.

He has spoken earlier of the class barrier being like the wall of an aquarium, invisible but perfectly real. And in the midst of this tale of otherwise unrelieved squalor and misery, suddenly occurs a passage showing a completely different approach to working-class life. 'I have often been struck,' he writes, 'by the peculiar easy completeness, the perfect symmetry as it were, of a working-class interior at its best. Especially on winter evenings after tea, when the fire glows in the open range and dances mirrored in the steel fender, when father in shirt sleeves sits in the rocking chair at one side of the fire reading the racing finals and mother sits in the other with her sewing, and the children are happy with a pennorth of mint humbugs, and the dog lolls roasting himself on the rag mat. It is a good place to be in provided that you can be not only in it but sufficiently *of* it to be taken for granted.'

One has the impression reading the paragraph that this was a scene glimpsed through a window in childhood and long stored in memory. Over the page, Orwell confirms the suspicion when once more he speaks of working-class interiors 'especially as I sometimes saw them in my childhood before the war.' The barrier one suspects is similar to that in his analogy of the aquarium, a window invisible but impenetrable. And it is no good just to be in the home; one must be 'taken for granted.' It is no

good being the lodger, as Orwell was in several workers' homes. You must be accepted . . . like whom? Like the happy children with their happy parents? One does not know. There is perhaps no point in trying to guess. All one knows is that out of suffering, no matter how it limited him, Orwell produced at least one book that touched men of his time deeply, and that even his slenderest writings helped many of us to examine our consciences with something of his fierce honesty.

'HOMAGE TO CATALONIA'

STEPHEN SPENDER

GEORGE ORWELL was not a saint—although he was one of the most virtuous men of his day—and he was not a hero—although he was a man of outstanding courage. He was an Innocent, a kind of English Candide of the twentieth century. The Innocent is ordinary because he accepts the values of ordinary human decency; he is not a mystic, nor a poet. Ordinary, and yet extraordinary, because his faith in qualities of truth and decency drives like a drill through the façade of his generation. He is a drill made of steel driving through ordinary things. He happens to believe that two and two make four; and that what happens, happens. The consequences of *really* believing this are shattering. Christ was brought up as a carpenter in a carpenter's shop.

Orwell was *really* what hundreds of others only pretend to be. He was really classless, really a Socialist, really truthful. The rule of his authenticity is made clear perhaps by the exceptional thing which might make him appear to be an upper-class moral adventurer who had neurotically strayed into the camp of the opposing class: the fact that he was an Etonian. For his Eton background was utterly irrelevant. He was what he was simply out of good faith and honesty, not out of neurosis or ecstasy or a sense of mystery. He was perhaps the least Etonian character who has ever come from Eton. He was a tall, lean, scraggy man, a Public House character, with a special gleam in his eye, and a home-made way of arguing from simple premisses, which could sometimes lead him to radiant common sense, sometimes to crankiness.

The Spanish Civil War was a situation which seemed almost designed for

this instrument to act upon. And bore into it he did, cutting a hole clean through it (it also cut a bullet-hole through his neck), and emerging at the other side. *Homage to Catalonia* contains the neat pile of shavings and sawdust below the operation. It is a better book than *1984*—which it strongly foreshadows—because the Spanish Republic provided a perfect situation for Orwell, whereas in *1984* his powers of political invention are rather strained. The horror of *Homage to Catalonia* is even greater than that of *1984*: but in the earlier book no one can accuse him of having invented tortures; for he is writing of what he has seen. The prophetic insight into the consequences of a state of affairs when human lives and facts are swept aside because they seem to contradict the thesis of 'political necessity' in the form in which it happens to be stated by the ruling party in the Police State, is the same. Orwell's faith in human decency, which goes beyond his terrifying insights into human weakness and malignity, is more impressive in the face of Communist methods in Spain than in a situation which seems fabricated. He never wrote anything more impressive than the last pages of this book: 'This war, in which I played so ineffectual a part, has left me with memories which are mostly evil, and yet I do not wish that I had missed it. When you have had a glimpse of such a disaster as this—and however it ends, the Spanish War will turn out to have been an appalling disaster, quite apart from the slaughter and physical suffering—the result is not necessarily disillusionment and cynicism. Curiously enough, the whole experience has left me with not less but more belief in the decency of human beings.'

The disaster which Orwell describes was the liquidation of his fellow militia-men on the Catalan Front, not by the Fascists, but by the Republicans under the domination of the Communists. It seems almost inevitable that when he enlisted in Spain, Orwell should have found himself with the militia of the POUM—the party which was afterwards banned for being Trotskyist. In fact, though, he only went to the Catalan Front and not into the International Brigade by chance. He happened to have references from the ILP which recommended him to the POUM. When he went to the front, he still regarded the Spanish War as a struggle of the united Republic against the Francoist rebellion. The political struggle within the Republican side seemed to him irrelevant. Gradually, however, he discovered that a struggle was going on between those who thought that the revolution should continue throughout the Civil War and those who thought it should be halted until the war was won. As far as Orwell had sympathies, these were with those who wished to concentrate above all on winning the war rather than with those who wished to hurry on the Revolution. On the Catalan Front he witnessed the hopeless inefficiency of the POUM militia, and he regarded their revolutionary and anarchist aspirations as rather dangerous idealism.

It was not until he had returned to Barcelona on leave in 1937 that the sharp conflict between the Communist-dominated central government and the POUM was forced on to him. In May of that year he found himself in street fighting between the police of the Republican Civil Guard and the Syndicalists and members of the POUM. His immediate reaction to this situation is typical of his strength and his weakness: 'The issue was clear enough. On one side the CNT, on the other side the police. I have no particular love for the idealised "worker" as he appears in the bourgeois Communist's mind, but when I see an actual flesh-and-blood worker in conflict with his natural enemy, the policeman, I do not have to ask myself which side I am on.' This clarification may not seem so convincing to the reader as it did to Orwell. After all, 'the police' in this instance were the police of the Republic and the fact of their being in conflict with a section of 'workers' does not automatically put them in the wrong. But Orwell's strength is the insight with which he sees the truth of a situation beyond a position which may at first appear wrong-headed. It was perhaps wrong-headed to go to the Catalan Front at all: but the result of this mistake was that he saw the Spanish fighting in a light far from the propaganda of the Republican side. He may be wrong-headed in his account of the political issues of the conflict between the POUM and the Communists (the evidence is so conflicting that it may be impossible ever to judge of this). But there can be no doubt that his condemnation of the methods used to suppress the POUM is one of the most serious indictments of Communism which has been written. It is possible to argue that the political leaders of the POUM were to some degree responsible for the fighting in Barcelona. But it is not possible to defend the betrayal of the militia on the Catalan Front whose members, when they returned on leave, were arrested in order that they should not tell the soldiers at the front 'that behind their backs their party was being suppressed, their leaders accused of treachery, and their friends and relatives thrown into prison.'

Homage to Catalonia makes me reflect on the meaning of the phrase 'the living truth'. This has all too often in history been exploited in order to trample on human freedoms for the sake of some authoritarian teaching which is supposed to bring happiness in this world or the next. Orwell was extremely sceptical of the claim of any cause to represent 'the living truth'. But he himself in his own life was an example of 'the lived truth', which is perhaps the most valuable truth anyone can offer to humanity. He made of his own life an acid test of the claims of anti-Fascism in Spain. In political terms a good many of his results are controversial; but as a test of the results of the Spanish War on people's lives, his position is absolutely irrefutable. He leaves us thinking that it will take more than an ideology to save our time. And no idea will result in anything but the kind of disaster he witnessed in Spain unless it is accompanied by a scrupulous

regard for the sacredness of the truth of an individual life. Politically, the liquidation of the POUM was not an event of great importance; humanly speaking, it was a greater failure for the Republic even than the defeat.

'ANIMAL FARM'

TOM HOPKINSON

WORK that is fine enough transforms the critic's task. He loses his title and becomes—what some critics start by being—an approver. For myself, I know only two present-day works of fiction before which the critic abdicates: one is Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*, the other Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Is it coincidence that both are concerned with Soviet Russia? Or is it that each of the two books tackles fearlessly the great theme of our day—which is also the great theme of human history—the struggle of individuals to assert their human values against the tyranny of mass: the courage required to assert these values being due not merely to the power of organised opinion, but to its claim—as city-state, or church, or nation—to have organised opinion for the sake of progress, and to be asking the surrender only of individual arrogance and intellectual pride?

The right of individual judgment being the most fundamental and precious of human rights, it is peculiarly the task of the artist—whose work is profoundly solitary and based on a kind of inward exploration—to uphold this right. When his personality and powers as an artist are not yet developed, he asserts it shrilly with defiance, often in a kind of scream. When, as with Orwell, he has found himself, he can assert it with a truly Oriental mixture of urbaneness and authority.

Animal Farm, as everyone knows by now, is a ninety-page satire—Orwell calls it 'a fairy-story'—on dictatorship. The animals on a farm expel their master and take over the control. They are entirely successful in their conduct of affairs. Where they are disastrously unsuccessful is in dealing with a problem they had never regarded as serious, and for which they had

therefore made little preparation: their behaviour to each other. 'Why do we continue in this miserable condition?' asks Major, the old boar, in the speech which precipitates the animals' 'revolt'. 'Because nearly the whole of the produce of our labour is stolen from us by human beings. There, comrades, is the answer to all our problems. It is summed up in a single word—Man. Man is the only real enemy we have. Remove Man from the scene, and the root cause of hunger and overwork is abolished for ever.'

The meeting ends with the singing of that great rallying cry 'Beasts of England'—and within a few months Jones, the farmer, and his men have been expelled. 'Some hams hanging in the kitchen were taken out for burial, and the barrel of beer in the scullery was stove in with a kick from Boxer's hoof, otherwise nothing in the house was touched. A unanimous resolution was passed on the spot that the farmhouse should be preserved as a museum. All were agreed that no animal must ever live there.'

Immense enthusiasm carries the animals along, but from the first moment distinctions and differences among themselves make their appearance . . . 'the pigs were so clever that they could think of a way round every difficulty . . . The pigs did not actually work, but directed and supervised the others. With their superior knowledge it was natural that they should assume the leadership.' With the leadership they also assume the buckets of milk yielded by the cows, and the apples from the orchard. 'Comrades!' cries Squealer. 'You do not imagine, I hope, that we pigs are doing this in a spirit of selfishness and privilege? Many of us actually dislike milk and apples . . . Milk and apples (this has been proved by Science, comrades) contain substances absolutely necessary to the well-being of a pig. We pigs are brain-workers. The whole management and organisation of this farm depend on us . . . It is for *your* sake that we drink that milk and eat those apples. Do you know what would happen if we pigs failed in our duty? Jones would come back! . . . Surely, comrades,' cried Squealer almost pleadingly, skipping from side to side and whisking his tail, 'Surely there is no one among you who wants to see Jones come back?'

So long, indeed, as there is any danger of Jones coming back—that is until after the decisive Battle of the Cowshed—animal unity survives. Once that is over, the rivalry between the two leading pigs—Snowball and Napoleon—breaks out into open violence. On every issue of policy Snowball and Napoleon are opposed. 'According to Napoleon, what the animals must do was to procure firearms and train themselves in the use of them. According to Snowball, they must send out more and more pigeons and stir up rebellion among the animals on the other farms.' The crucial test comes over the building of the windmill designed to give power to mechanise the farm. It is Snowball's project, and his glowing picture of life on a farm from which sordid labour has been banished carries the day in the animals' Sunday meeting. But at this moment Napoleon gives a signal, and nine

enormous dogs, wearing brass-studded collars, come bounding into the barn. To the consternation of the watching animals, they chase Snowball away down the pasture and off the farm altogether. He narrowly escapes with his life—and it is some time before Napoleon and his pig-supporters can convince the other animals that Snowball is no better than a criminal; that, so far from winning the Battle of the Cowshed, he had behaved in a cowardly manner—and, in fact, has been secretly in league with the detested Jones from the beginning. Finally, the name Snowball is made synonymous with treachery, and his machinations are held responsible for every failure on the farm, and for the continued privations suffered by the animals. Boxer, the ever-loyal cart-horse, coins a new slogan: 'If Comrade Napoleon says it, it must be right', and the sheep cover up all hesitations over policy with mass-bleating of 'Four legs good, two legs bad!'—which has been recognised as conveying the inner essential truth of the new philosophy, Animalism.

However, the animals are surprised to find that victories over human enemies and circumstances bring no pleasanter conditions. In August, Napoleon announces that there will be work on Sunday afternoons as well. 'This work was strictly voluntary, but any animal who absented himself from it would have his rations reduced by half.' In the autumn the pigs suddenly move into the farmhouse and take up residence there. They even sleep in the beds. This disturbs the other animals, who remember that one of the basic principles of Animalism is 'no animal shall sleep in a bed.' Squealer immediately corrects their false impression. The principle, he reminds them, was that 'no animal shall sleep in a bed *with sheets*.' All animals have beds of one sort or another; it is sheets which are the contaminating human influence. 'You would not rob us of our repose, would you, comrades? You would not have us too tired to carry out our duties? Surely none of you wishes to see Jones back?'

Shortly after, a number of traitor-animals are executed, following full confession—'a goose came forward and confessed to having secreted six ears of corn during the last year's harvest and eaten them in the night. Then a sheep confessed to having urinated in the drinking pool—urged to do this, so she said, by Snowball'—and the singing of 'Beasts of England' is prohibited. It 'was the song of the rebellion. But the rebellion is now completed. The execution of the traitors . . . was the final act. The enemy both external and internal has been defeated . . . Clearly this song has no longer any purpose.' At the same time the precept, 'No animal shall kill any other animal', is found to have been incomplete: the full and proper precept runs 'No animal shall kill any other animal *without cause*.'

At last Animal Farm is established as a going concern: the pigs and dogs, who act as their police, live lavishly. 'As for the others, their life, so far as they knew, was as it always had been. They were generally hungry, they slept on straw, they drank from the pool, they laboured in the fields; in

winter they were troubled by the cold, and in summer by the flies. The pigs continually remind them how much better off they are than they were in Jones's day, but by now there are few animals left alive who can remember what life was like before the great rebellion. They are sustained by a sense of pride in being the only farm in all England owned and operated by animals . . . but soon even this satisfaction will be taken from them. They return from the fields one evening to a sight that dumbfounds them all. It is a pig walking on its hind legs. Squealer, the first, is followed by a long file of pigs. Last of all, amid a baying of dogs, comes Napoleon himself carrying a whip in his trotter. And at this moment a great bleating breaks out from the sheep, carefully coached in a new slogan: 'Four legs good, two legs *better*!'

The basic principle of Animalism, 'All Animals are Equal', has been given its proper qualifying clause—'But Some Animals are More Equal than Others.' The book ends with a banquet provided by Napoleon for the neighbouring farmers in which, to the hungry creatures gazing through the windows, man and pig appear indistinguishable, and Napoleon announces to the cheering farmers that the name of 'Animal Farm' is abandoned in favour of the original, more dignified, 'Manor Farm'.

* * *

Animal Farm is conceived and written in the classic tradition of satire—the tradition of the receding planes, which gives it precisely the depth of every reader. It is as delightful a children's story as *Gulliver's Travels* or the best of Aesop. It is manifestly an attack on Stalinism. It can be read as a lament —a wonderfully good-humoured and entertaining lament—for the fate of revolutions. It is a profound and moving comment on man's divided nature—forced to combine, but compromising with truth in every combination that he makes.

Orwell's knowledge of farming helps to maintain the necessary faint illusion of reality. Nothing is shirked—even the relations of 'Animal Farm' with its human neighbours. Everything is treated with the combined lightness and assurance that suspend disbelief. Each detail of the story suggests to the reader a parallel, or whole set of parallels, in the modern world. 'The wild creatures, such as rats and rabbits—are they our friends or our enemies? Let us put it to the vote. I propose this question to the meeting: Are rats comrades?'

Animal Farm demands the tribute every critic most hesitates to pay, for, by paying it, he invites not only the sneers of present-day opposition but the ridicule of future generations.

Animal Farm is a work of genius in the lofty tradition of English humorous writing.

'1984'

HERBERT READ

ORWELL'S last work will undoubtedly rank as his greatest, though I suspect that *Animal Farm* will end by being the most popular, if only because it can be read as a fairy-tale by children. But *1984* has a far greater range of satirical force, and a grimness of power which could perhaps come only from the mind of a sick man. As literature, it has certain limitations. Satire, as Swift realised, becomes monotonous if carried too far in the same vein, and he therefore sent Gulliver to several different countries where human folly took on distinct guises. Though both writers have in common a savagery of indignation, the comparison of their work cannot be carried very far. Fundamental to Swift is a certain *disgust* of humanity and *despair* of life; fundamental to Orwell is a *love* of humanity and a passionate desire to live in freedom. There is a difference of style, too, for though both practised a direct and unaffected narrative, Swift's is still playfully baroque—or, rather, baroquely playful. A more useful comparison is with Defoe—and this comparison holds good for the whole of Orwell's output. Defoe was the first writer to raise journalism to a literary art; Orwell perhaps the last. One could make direct comparisons between their writings if it would serve any purpose (between, say, *The Road to Wigan Pier* and the *Journal of the Plague Year*), but I prefer an indirect comparison between *1984* and *Robinson Crusoe*. The desert island is a long way from the totalitarian State; nevertheless, there is the same practicality in the construction of both books, and Winston Smith, 'his chin nuzzled into his breast in an effort to escape the vile wind', slipping 'quickly through the glass doors of Victory Mansions, though not quickly enough to prevent a swirl of gritty dust from entering along with him', is the same Little Man hero who, as Robinson Crusoe, being one day at Hull, 'went on board a ship bound for London . . . without any consideration of circumstances or consequences, and in an ill hour, God knows.' Strictly speaking, *Robinson Crusoe* is neither a satire nor an Utopia, whereas *1984* is an Utopia in reverse—not an *Erewhon*, which is an Utopia upside-down. *Erewhon* is still written after the ameliorative pattern of *Utopia* itself: you may, paradoxically, be punished for being ill, but the ideal is health. In *1984* the pattern is malevolent; everything is for the worst in the worst of all possible worlds. But the pattern begins in the present—in our existing totalitarian States.

On page 157 there is a significant sentence which might be taken as the motif of the book: *By lack of understanding they remained sane.* The crime of Winston Smith, the hero of *1984*, was the use of a critical intelligence, his Socratic inability to stop asking questions. That 'ignorance is bliss' is no new discovery, but it has generally been assumed that understanding, which brings with it a sense of responsibility, an awareness of suffering and a tragic view of life, has compensations of a spiritual nature. It has been the object of modern tyrannies to deny man this sense of responsibility, and gradually to eliminate all feelings. The greatest enemies of the totalitarian State are not ideas (which can be dealt with dialectically) but aesthetic and erotic sensations. In the love of objective beauty, and in the love of an individual of the opposite sex, the most oppressed slave can escape to a free world. Religion is not so dangerous because it tends to be ideological and can be undermined by propaganda. But the sympathy of love, and the empathy of art—these feelings must be eradicated from the human breast if man's allegiance to Caesar (Big Brother) is to be complete. Orwell does not deal with the totalitarian hostility to art, but the dramatic quality which makes his satire so readable is due to his perception of the totalitarian hostility to love. ' "They can't get inside you," she had said. But they could get inside you. "What happens to you here is *for ever*?" O'Brien had said. That was a true word. There were things, your own acts, from which you could not recover. Something was killed in your breast: burnt out, cauterised out.'

Orwell was a humanitarian—always moved by sympathy, by human love. The inconsistencies of his political opinions sprang from this fact. Consistently he would have been a pacifist, but he could not resist the Quixotic impulse to spring to arms in defence of the weak or oppressed. It would be difficult to say what positive political ideals were left this side of his overwhelming disillusion with Communism. In his last years he saw only the menace of the totalitarian State, and he knew he had only the force left to warn us. It is the most terrifying warning that a man has ever uttered, and its fascination derives from its veracity. Millions of people have read this book. Why? It has no charm; it makes no concession to sentiment. It is true that there are some traces of eroticism, but surely not enough to make the book, for those who seek that sort of thing, a worthwhile experience. An element of sado-masochism in the public may explain the strange success of this book. In the past the success of a book like Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* was not due to a disinterested love of the truth, or even to a hatred of Catholicism. Foxe himself was a tolerant man, but there is no evidence that his book produced a mood of tolerance in his millions of readers. I would like to think that the reading of *1984* had effectively turned the tide against the authoritarian State, but I see no evidence of it. Of Orwell's readers must it also be said: By lack of understanding they remain sane?

A FOOTNOTE ABOUT '1984'

ALDOUS HUXLEY

TALKING of *1984* and the future, I have been greatly interested recently to find that what I prophesied about 'Hypnopaedia' in *Brave New World* is now an accomplished fact. Pillow microphones attached to clock-controlled phonographs playing suitable recordings at regular intervals during the night are now being used quite extensively here by pediatricians who want to get rid of childish fears and bad habits, such as bed-wetting, or to help backward children acquire larger vocabularies, and by students who want to learn foreign languages in a quarter of the time ordinarily required for the job. (This device was largely employed by the U.S. Army in training men to acquire a working knowledge of colloquial Chinese or Japanese in a month or six weeks.) It looks very much as though the systematic brutality described in *1984* will seem to the really intelligent dictators of the future altogether too inefficient, messy and wasteful. Hypnopaedic methods can be used to make the rubber truncheon and the concentration camp unnecessary; and the ecstasy of satisfied power-lust can be obtained just as effectively from the spectacle of men and women conditioned into loving their servitude as by that of men and women driven by fear into unwilling obedience.

V. Richards

George Orwell

(1903–1950)

ART NOTES

By ROBERT MELVILLE

I WOULD like to make a trick-film of a crime story in which a large family of strong, hefty adults is slaughtered while at Sunday tea by a rather puny schoolboy. The problem for the C.I.D. is to find enough murderers to account for the clues found on the scene of the crime. These clues include twenty-seven caps bearing the same school badge, sixteen pairs of steel-rimmed glasses repaired across the bridge with black darning wool, and eleven sleeves torn away from the left shoulder of dark blue school blazers. The murdered family occupied a farm-house which adjoined the grounds of a big boarding-school. The badge on the caps bears the motto of this school. The school authorities are helpful: each item of clothing issued to the boys has been carefully recorded. The boys are summoned to a dress parade; each has his bundle of spare clothing before him. *Nothing is missing.* But one boy is wearing glasses tied up with black darning wool, and an inspection of the left sleeve of his blazer reveals the fact that the threads of the shoulder-seam are very loose. He is taken away for questioning, but he tells nothing. The detectives send him back to school while they try to puzzle things out. He confides in another boy. When the coast is clear, they slip into the headmaster's study, each armed with a hatchet. Two long mirrors face one another across the room. When one stares into one of these mirrors, the other is visible in the far wall of the reflection. The boys enter one of the mirrors and are met by their reflections; the four of them make for the mirror in the far wall of the looking-glass room and pass through it; eight boys now proceed to the mirror in the far wall of the reflection, and so on. Soon there are vast numbers of them queueing up to pass through far-off reflected rooms which in fact occupy no space at all. When the ringleader is satisfied with the numbers recruited, he opens the door of the last reflection and leads his army across to the farm. The detectives are still on the prowl, hoping for something to turn up that will throw light on the mystery. They are murdered by the boys.

Such notions as this, not unconnected with the hope of some day writing a long study of the first chapter of Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*, are by-products of an insatiable appetite for the magic of illusory space, of space created on a flat surface, which feeds most frequently on paintings.

A child's longing to enter the mirror usually dies of frustration: the hand touches the barrier of cold glass too often. Finally, the room in the mirror is no longer even inaccessible: it simply isn't there. I was never disillusioned by the touching of the glass: the coldness of it provided valuable information about the room I could not enter. The room in the mirror always *looked* colder than the room I was in, and my hands confirmed it. When I touched the mirror, I felt the cold air of that other reality. I wish Alice had met her double on the other side of the mirror and entered into conversation with her. The other Alice would undoubtedly have had the same psychological make-up, but her colder, phantasmal environment would have led to a different, unpredictable expression of it.

Degas—and it is an exhibition of some works by this master at Reid and Lefevre's charming new Gallery in Bruton Street that has prompted these reflections—Degas painted just such meetings of two images of the same person, in his wonderful double portraits of his niece, Mme. Fèvre. In the picture in the Dumbarton Oaks collection, one image of the girl runs impetuously forward, her face intense and eager, her hand outstretched to touch her double, who stands quite still, cool and on the defensive: she has raised her hand as if to ward off any attempt that the other might make to kiss her, and the shadow of her hand falls across her face, intensifying the enigma and the allure.

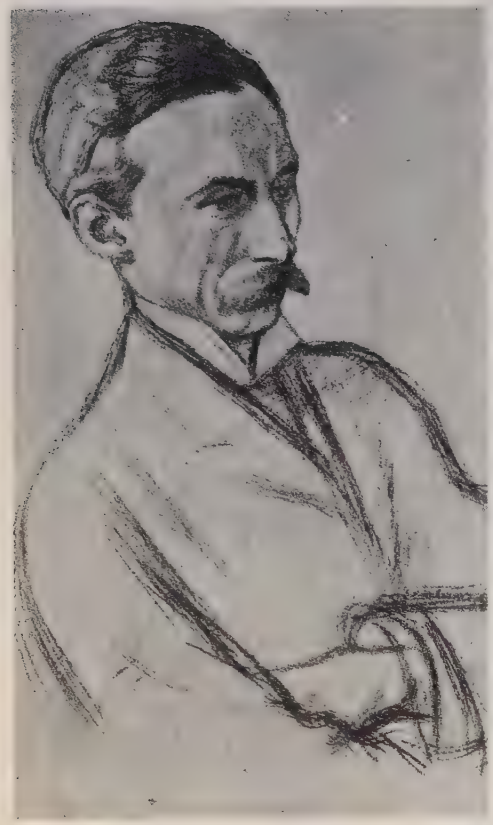
Degas was influenced by double-exposure photography, but his mastery of, and obsession with, movement sometimes led him

Collection: Arthur Jeffress, Esq.

TRIPLE SELF-PORTRAIT by Christian Bérard

to create works which are more related to the film-strip. His famous *Frieze of Dancers*, four views of the same girl tying her shoes, conveys an extraordinary sense of a single activity sustained to its conclusion, and of a girl outside herself, of a girl multiplying herself before our eyes. Looking at this picture, one can see why, thirty years later, futurism was a burningly necessary experiment. And, looking at some of the double portraits of his niece which show her full-face and in profile, one view smiling and passive, the other nervous, troubled, intense, one comes a little nearer to understanding why Picasso had to find a way of fusing these opposed views in a single image, of finding a new kind of unity based on a Proustian awareness of the human personality as an aggregate of strangers.

But it is Christian Bérard, in pictures stemming directly from the example of Degas, who has made the most convincing, the most subtle, the most Joycean *self*-portraits in this century. One of the greatest of these is happily in an English collection. It could be called a triple-exposure or family-group of himself. Seated in a kind of serene disquiet on a featureless seashore are three images of Bérard—one as a young man, another as a young girl, the third as a middle-aged woman. Their glances never meet, and they fill the surrounding space with a sense of their mutually antipathetic longings. An exhibition dedicated to the memory of Bérard, who was so successful and yet never perhaps fully appreciated as a painter, is being held at the New Burlington Galleries, and the Arts Council



BERTRAND RUSSELL in 1904 and HENRY JAMES in 1898, by William Rothenstein

deserves the warmest thanks for giving the British public its first opportunity of seeing a representative selection of his work.

* * *

Painters are the master-magicians of illusory space. The mirror is removed, but the image remains. In each generation of painters there are those who want glass in their frames and those who do not. There are those who want the glimpses they provide of another reality to remain untouchable, to be seen, so to speak, through a closed window, and there are those who want the winds of this other reality to mingle with the air of the rooms where the pictures hang. But whether the window is open or closed, the frame is there to mark the threshhold. I sometimes wonder whether this four-sided frame could be modified in a way that would bring back to those who have long since lost touch with the magic of the mirror a sense of the mystery and fascination of illusory space. There are certain pictures which might well reveal their magic to the uninitiated if they were framed on only three sides, with the lower edge of the canvas resting on the floor, so that the image is seen as if through an open doorway. Thinking along these lines in connection with Francis Bacon's recent picture of a nude walking through curtains, it occurred to me that one could experience the sensation of entering it much more freely if it were so disposed in a room; one would become aware of an invisible step, one would drop an unknown distance to the unseen floor on which the figure is walking. And this is

not really an idle fancy, for it is a physical reflection of the vertigo that seizes anyone who is left alone with this particular picture for any length of time.

The idea of the frame as a doorway does not leave small pictures out of account. I would like to exhibit a small early Chirico, for instance—one of the silent squares in deep recession, glowing with the golden light of late afternoon—in the far corner of an empty room, and at floor level, with a three-sided frame making a little doorway. Only one person at a time would be allowed into this room, for the presence of others is a protection against pictures. One would have to bend very low to see it, or even go on to one's hands and knees, and this action would put one into the position of Alice when she opened the little door behind the curtain, and, from the prison of the dark corridor, saw a rose garden in sunlight.

THE WILLIAM ROTHENSTEIN MEMORIAL EXHIBITION AT THE TATE

I fancy that most people of my generation —we were too young to know the New English Art Club in its heyday—think of William Rothenstein as a catcher of likenesses, as an artist whose portraits are a kind of proof of how brilliantly Max Beerbohm caricatured the same people. W.R.'s portraits of Verlaine, Anatole France, Hardy, Conrad, W. H. Hudson, André Gide, Henry James with a beard, Lord Alfred Douglas with a demure yellow flower in his lapel, the young G. B. S., all alertness and fire, with intense blue eyes and a flaring ginger beard, the young Bertrand Russell, Ralph Hodgson in khaki—all seem to belong more to literary history than to art; the artist's intervention is lost in the 'speaking' likeness. No art could be more unassuming.

In 1898, when Rothenstein drew his noble portrait of Henry James (it was rather whimsically reproduced in the second number of *Horizon* to accompany an anecdote about the portrait of James painted by Sargent), James was thinking round the idea of a woman commissioning the portrait of an imaginary *très-bel homme* because she wants to feel as if she had been

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married, and it was no doubt a Jamesian fear of extravagance that produced the modified version of this idea for the short story entitled 'The Tone of Time'. In this story, published two years later, the conditions of the commission were not carried out, and the portrait which was to give the ex-*femme galante* a vicarious widowhood was painted from memory. It would certainly have to be an artist extravagantly endowed who could invent faces as unique, mysterious and magnificent as those which confront us in Rothenstein's portraits of literary men. He had a subtle understanding of writers, and he read the books of the men he drew.

His art has a curiously anonymous virtuosity; there is nothing that could be called the Rothenstein 'touch'. On the other hand, there is no woolliness, none of that fatuous and nauseating upholstering of the subject to which the Royal Academy has so long been addicted. And there is one rather magical document in this show in which the catching of a likeness takes an altogether unexpected turn.

It is a reproduction, taken from a defunct French art magazine, of a lost pastel of a woman's head drawn by Rothenstein in 1891, and it bears a startling resemblance to the work of Picasso's blue period, which came a full decade later. It is a study made from a professional model. A picture of the same woman, called 'Parting at Morning' after Browning's poem, happens to be for me the most compelling work in the exhibition, but it is quite remote from the atmosphere of the other: the gold paint of the background, consciously linked with 'the path of gold' mentioned in the verse written out at the hem of the skirt, introduces a dated literary sentiment and the picture is saved by the fact that the woman is only a little transformed by the vague symbolism. It is clearly a much more ambitious work than the lost pastel, which is simply a study from the life. And if this solitary unpretentious pastel could predict a whole period of one of the elect and yet leave no trace of its poetry in Rothenstein's subsequent work, it is perhaps because Rothenstein could not make the transition from the thing seen to the thing visualised without the dubious aid of literature.

A GOD IN THREE DISGUISES

A Tribute to Thomas Mann's seventy-fifth birthday

HEIDI HEIMANN

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T. S. ELIOT

'The Dry Salvages'

It must have been in the middle of the Second Act of T. S. Eliot's play *The Cocktail Party* that I stumbled to 'the impossible union'—or to some of the underlying meaning at least—which is there made 'actual'. Warned earlier by the peculiar behaviour of the uninvited guest, who assumes abrupt predominance by promising to bring back the vanished wife within twenty-four hours if the husband so wishes, it suddenly flashed through me, while the session in the consulting-room was in full swing: 'Oh, Eliot has this figure, too—Psychopomp!' It was a lightning glimpse; then the play moved on and I was swept forward by the incessant, swift conversation, interrupted now and again by fresh insight, especially in the Third Act, when the same figure, Alex, and indeed Sir Harcourt-Reilly and Julia, reveal their true nature still more, always keeping it well hidden under an up-to-date cloak of fashionable worldliness.

What appeared so lucid and unmistakable to me then—and what in my memory was immediately connected with a few other similar experiences—seems to be open to quite a number of interpretations. Somehow, in naming or deciphering these figures, one destroys the spell, which works best and most effectively just through the disguise. The exemplary way Eliot deals

with his figures corresponds exactly to the inimitable way he treats his verse. You hardly notice—and you are not meant to—that these people speak verse—of a kind. In the same sense you are, and are not, asked to realise who Sir Harcourt-Reilly and his helpers symbolise. To give them any other names than those they assume in the play would be distinctly tactless, and would show bad manners, like pointing with an outstretched finger to a person in the same room. Eliot's reluctance and evasiveness in answering probing questions in this direction is fully understandable and justified. Still, the fact that I recognised whom Alex might represent on another, a higher or deeper, level, was not merely because I had guessed the poet's secret meaning: it was based on a definite, complex recollection. I had encountered this disguised figure before in an equally surprising, though quite different, disguise on another but equally memorable occasion.

II

It was Cocteau's *Orphée* which came to mind, over a gap of more than twenty years. How strange, how absurd, but how *right* this connection proved to be! Cocteau re-enacts the famous Greek myth, and from the very beginning gives the game away in the title of his play and the names of the two main parts, Orphée and Eurydice. But then and there the fun starts. His disguise is at once thinner and more miraculous, lighter and more playful. He remains faithful to the plot and to the main figures. Then he not only transposes everything into modern times, terms, and dress, but also invents a host of new devices and tricks: a speaking horse, a poisoned envelope, a magical mirror. While keeping very close to the antique 'story' he, too, has a medical figure woven into it: Death, *La Mort*, is a woman surgeon in full ball-room dress. I am, however, not concerned with this clever addition, but with another more startling transformation: with Heurtebise, the glazier boy. Fully expecting to see the story follow the well-known pattern, it was still one of the great and unforgettable moments to watch, on the stage, how Heurtebise, the glazier boy (played by Cocteau himself, with George and Ludmilla Pitoëff as Orphée and Eurydice) makes his godliness known by keeping suspended in the air; 'a miracle' calculated to frighten and move the audience none less than Eurydice. From that moment onwards the spectator, naturally, is fully aware of what is up, and follows every further twist with relish.

To make Hermes into the glazier boy, Heurtebise, is an incredibly ingenious masquerade. It not only gives an opportunity for Eurydice's 'breaking glass for luck', but allows all the magic connected with mirrors to come into play, by still retaining the original function of the god. And how very *French* in the best sense is this camouflage, never stooping to travesty. France, bordering on both the Mediterranean and the North Sea—in this respect alone among European nations—has always kept specially close in poetry, as well as in painting and sculpture, to the antique tradition, re-enlivening it at the same time with ever new significance. We do not commit an indiscretion when we frankly identify Heurtebise with Hermes. They are, however, by no means identical: the formidable pale, indistinct shape of the god, and the very distinct, charming personality of the glazier boy. The delight which Cocteau's work provokes lies on the one hand in the faithfulness with which he keeps to the antique tradition, and on the other hand in the playful freedom with which he treats the age-old concept. Rilke praised Cocteau 'as the only person for whom the myth opens its gates and from which he returns bronzed as from the seaside.'

III

Eliot's rather ordinary figure, Alex, the man with connections, letting through, unexpectedly, a glimmering of symbolic undercurrent, belongs to the same family, of which another member reveals himself in Cocteau's Heurtebise. Yet, all the time I knew there was something else; other memories from another province, in

another language crowded in from another direction. A strange encounter, a guide appearing noiseless from nowhere—it is Joseph on his way to his brethren. 'And a certain man found Joseph, and, behold, he was wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou? And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks. And the man said, They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren and found them in Dothan.' (Genesis xxxvii. 15–17.) That is all that the Bible tells us about this meeting. It forms such a minor incident in the momentous life-story of Joseph that many who remember the famous story well enough may have quite forgotten it. I personally recollect, when I read excitedly through *The Young Joseph*, the second of Thomas Mann's volumes, that I was quite unprepared for it. My first reaction, therefore, when a mystifying figure appeared, was one of those ambiguous, sinister, typically Thomas Mann's figures in whom he delights, and who turn up again and again in his work, without, however, stopping to nail the impression down to any particular figure in any of his earlier books, but reading on breathlessly enthralled. Not for long, though; who would not feel apprehensive after the first few words between Joseph and this stranger, already dimly conscious of his significant costume: 'a sleeveless linen tunic drawn loosely through a girdle, thus freeing the knees, and a little mantle flung back over the shoulder', carrying a staff. The author's insistence that Joseph was so relieved to meet a *man*, a *human* being, in this accursed night with an ineffectual moon, is the ironical, confusing veil with which Thomas Mann here, as elsewhere in his immensely long book—over 2,000 pages in the first German edition—clothes all figures and events. He teases the reader with hint, suggestion and allusion, throwing everything into remote perspective. And then the alarming fact comes to light that this guide is a thief. He has stolen some of Joseph's provisions, carried by Hulda, the white she-ass, on which Joseph rode away from home. Every single step, word, action adds yet another touch to the picture 'of the mischievous god . . . a gifted youth, skilled in devices, never at a loss for flexible stratagems, a helper to gods and men . . . the god of favourable chance, of shrewd persuasive speech and of smiling inventiveness; shedding blessing and well-being—whether honestly or even a bit dishonestly won, the way life is; a leader and guide through the windings of this world, turning back with lifted staff to smile. Even the dead he guides in their kingdom of the moon . . .' Thus the god's characteristics are listed during the interminable conversation between Pharaoh and Joseph much later in the story. It is one thing, however, to talk about a god, another to meet him.

IV

The Man whom Joseph meets shows other disquieting traits; he is evidently unwilling to carry out his mission, to obey orders. His unpleasantness, arrogance and haughtiness are quite in keeping with the attitude attributed by Thomas Mann to the Heavens towards the experiment carried out on earth. The most outspoken evidence of this attitude is to be found later in the introduction to the last volume, *Prelude in the Upper Circles*. This correlation comes out most clearly during the second apparition of the Man. Reuben, hurrying furtively to the pit with the intention of saving Joseph, finds it empty but guarded by the very Man who himself had announced earlier that this would be part of his mission. A long, bewildering conversation between Reuben and the Man follows: vague, full of allusions—some to be made clear to Reuben much later, many never, hinting at bigger things in a far distant future. When, during the first appearance in the night on the way to Shechem, this Man gave certain indications of his essence, we thought we would discover little wings on his feet and probably round his head; by now it is equally evident that much larger ones on his back would be appropriate. Neither, of course, is mentioned; he is, as before, a figure in a short mantle leaning on a staff, of very individual and pronounced features. As such, he occurs surprisingly once more: as

the guide who leads the Ishmaelites on their journey downwards to the kingdom of the dead, to the underworld, to Egypt. To get there, the Ishmaelites, with the precious slave Joseph, have first to cross a dreaded desert, a frightful nine-day expanse. They need a guide to conduct them safely through. That is when the Man presents himself for the third time. He retains throughout his highly individual features, his mild haughtiness, his sleepy reluctance and his peculiar repulsive behaviour.

And that provides the clue, too, to the figure of which the Man first reminded me: the appearance, in *Death in Venice* on the steps of the mortuary chapel in Munich, of a youth of exotic looks, who sets in motion in Gustav Aschenbach the phantasies and associations which tempt him on to his trip to Venice, and finally to his death. This foreboding encounter, obviously, signals fatal intervention. It is quite probable that Thomas Mann developed the later detailed description of the guide on the way to Shechem with a secret chuckle, recollecting this, his earlier brother.

The Greek god and the guardian angel are fused inseparably in the Man—a peculiarity which he shares with the other two, with Cocteau's Heurtebise and Eliot's Alex. According to the more restricting demands of the stage, they show these double characteristics in a lesser degree. They belong, however, to the same order of beings. In the case of Heurtebise, we have undeniable proof of his double nature in a cycle of poems by Cocteau, which he himself calls '*Ange* Heurtebise'. About the Christian implications in Eliot's play, there can be no doubt. Martyrdom is put before us as the ultimate goal. The tasks of the antique god and of the biblical angel are very similar; only their emotional fervour differs.

The comparison of these three personifications has its rewards, because it proves the undiminished living reality of the archetype and at the same time the overwhelming power of the poet: each one stamps his unique individuality on the age-old concept, and each creates a figure wholly typical of his personal vision.

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Vannevar Bush. *Heinemann.* 10s. 6d.

Reviewed by Max Beloff

Dr. Vannevar Bush has been unlucky in the time of his book's publication. There has, since its writing, occurred in the form of the reported atomic explosion in Russia, what appears to be a contradiction of one of his few pieces of direct prophecy: 'It is a far cry indeed from the time when the enemy has a bomb.' The hydrogen bomb announcement also came afterwards. And this has led people to think that the conclusions he comes to about the advancing techniques of the defensive in modern war, about the unlikelihood of a total destruction of civilisation, and on the superiority of the democracies, may be the result of an over-sanguine temperament rather than of hard-headed calculation. Yet this does scant justice to the book, or to the author. And this for two reasons. For one thing, Dr. Bush explicitly aligns himself with those who believe that there are limits to the proper discussion of the war-time applications of science; there is no reason to believe that he puts all his cards on the table. (And on submarine warfare, he is pessimistic enough in all conscience.) Even more important is the fact that the description of the past achievements and present position of science in relation to war is only part of his purpose—even if for many readers it may provide the most enthralling part of what he has to say. In a world in which nothing is rarer than a scientist with enough sense to talk intelligently of the implications of his work for society as a whole, Dr. Vannevar Bush is a shining exception. One has only to think of the imbecilities of some famous British scientists when they get outside a laboratory, to feel that America can well be proud of Dr. Bush. The real value of his book lies in the fact that it is a serious treatment, by someone of unquestioned scientific eminence, of what must be the relative position of science in free and unfree societies, and of what in that respect are the lessons of recent history.

It is so easy to assume that 'dictatorship' is synonymous with 'efficiency', the failings of democracy are so public and so obvious, that it is heartening to find Dr. Bush so convinced that it was the Nazi dictatorship that was itself responsible for the relative failure of German as compared with Allied science. Students of the U.S.S.R. and its institutions, who, like the present writer, are convinced that what must doom the system is not its immorality but its inefficiency, will find Dr. Bush's confirmation of this supposition from a quite different viewpoint exceptionally suggestive. And in the process of such discussions, he disposes of some well-worn illusions, such as that in war, cost is irrelevant.

At a time when imaginations run riot, it is helpful to find, instead of some horrific discussion of the potentialities of biological warfare, an analysis of the ways of improving medical education which, although written with the United States in mind, has wider applications than that.

It must not be thought, however, that all is well, as Dr. Bush sees it. He shows, without going into detail, how incomplete the American organisation for planning defence with full reference to scientific trends still is, and how far from perfect is the chain of command and responsibility in this field. Inter-departmental struggles for funds on the floor of Congress reflect such imperfections. One would like to be certain that our own organisation would pass Dr. Bush's scrutiny.

Only on one point does Dr. Bush raise issues without settling them. But it is an important one. In his analysis of the cold war, he is emphatic about the amount of harm that can be done by a few men whose devotion is not to their own democracy but to the alien totalitarianism. Dr.

Bush disapproves of the witch-hunting which has led to men being attacked on security grounds for what are essentially political beliefs. But this does not solve the problem of the others. Where is one to draw the line? What right have we, with such issues at stake, to take even the smallest of risks? All those concerned with scientific progress either in government service, or the Universities, must regard this as an intellectual and moral issue of the gravest kind. One could wish that Dr. Bush had given us more guidance. But certainly this is a book that every conscientious citizen must read.

BRITISH BROADCASTING: A STUDY IN MONOPOLY

By R. H. Coase. *London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London, and Longmans, Green & Co.* 12s. 6d.

Reviewed by Roger Manvell

This book is opportune for two reasons, among others. The first is that a great deal of attention will be paid to the future structure of British broadcasting very shortly when the Beveridge Committee's Report is published this year and the terms of the new B.B.C. Charter are decided in 1951. Mr. Coase's study provides a careful piece of research on the history of the B.B.C.'s fight for the monopoly of the British air, and it will be of great use to all those who take part in the forthcoming discussions and debates. Another reason for the timeliness of the book is that the motives for maintaining or modifying this monopoly will probably receive their first really thorough examination during these next eighteen months. Mr. Coase maintains in his book that, ever since the earliest days of the British Broadcasting Company (1922–26), the need for monopoly has been assumed rather than proved, both on technical grounds and on the grounds, so strongly advocated by Lord Reith, that only by co-ordinating the whole programme policy of British broadcasting through a centralised corporation could its standards be kept high and its service well-balanced in the general public interest.

Mr. Coase, a Reader in Economics in the University of London, writes with patience and precision. He is concerned that the B.B.C. should have achieved its monopolistic position so easily in a country where public speech is normally kept as free as possible. He explains this phenomenon (it is really no less in British society) on the grounds that no one but the Radio Engineers and the technical staff of the G.P.O. understood the initial problem of the limitation of wavelengths. This was always the reason given for the desirability of placing broadcasting under public control instead of leaving it to the devices of private enterprise, particularly in the form of radio transmission sponsored by commercial interests buying programme time for advertising purposes. When Mr. Reith was appointed as General Manager of the British Broadcasting Company in 1922, he set his mind and the strength of his great personality to the task of achieving full control of British broadcasting, but he won the day more easily than one would have thought possible. The Press was opposed to a rival in the advertising field, and, for once, the political parties were unanimously in favour of programme control. The monopoly has remained to this day, surviving the successive investigations of the Sykes Committee (1923), the Crawford Committee (1925) and the Ullswater Committee (1935). It was threatened only by the principle of wire broadcasting (rediffusion) and by the competition offered by broadcasts in English transmitted from abroad. But will this monopoly survive the Report of the Beveridge Committee and be upheld once more in the new Charter of December 1951?

The B.B.C. occupies a curious position in British life. It is the butt of the same sort of jokes as our Civil Service, and it is even considered at times to be a bit of an old woman. But, again, like the Civil Service, it is thought worthy of a great deal of respect. The British, being fundamentally a race who respect the decencies, like their radio to do the same. Though the liberality of the B.B.C. has been known to lapse on occasion (Mr. Coase gives some

instances), it has shown a high measure of impartiality in political and other controversial matters, as well as in its handling of the old tug-of-war between the higher and lower forms of entertainment. But, as Mr. Coase himself says, the argument for monopoly in the field of broadcasting carries the seeds of a great danger.

'This argument is powerful and on its assumptions it is no doubt logical. Its main disadvantage is that to accept its assumptions it is necessary first to adopt a totalitarian philosophy or at any rate something verging on it.'

There is no doubt that the Beveridge Committee is equally exercised over the difficult problem of how to introduce into British broadcasting a greater measure of competition, both in entertainment and in the expression of opinion, than is possible under a completely unified system. For we do not want to lose in any process of decentralisation those high standards which the B.B.C. has created, and of which, within their strict limits, the British are rightly proud.

THE SEQUENCE OF ENGLISH MEDIAEVAL ART

By Walter Oakeshott. *Faber & Faber.* 35s.

Reviewed by Geoffrey Grigson

Why is this page of an Anglo-Saxon manuscript or of an East Anglian psalter to be admired? Because, writes Mr. Oakeshott in this finely produced book, it is lovely, brilliant, superb, splendid, magnificent, masterly, ethereal, extraordinary or remarkable. Texts of this kind deserve two barrels of protest they do not often get. They mix history with appreciation. Too often the history is thin and the appreciation a matter of epithets. Mr. Oakeshott wants to explain how English mediæval painting changes from style to style, but he also wants to reveal which paintings, or which illuminations, we ought to admire; and here his plea becomes the simple one 'You must admire it because, my dear Sir, it is admirable.' The business-letter way of writing and the un-subtlety of analysis would be a joke—if the subject were literature and not painting.

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Another argument implied rather than stated is, 'You ought to admire these paintings, all of them, because they are English', whereas the historian of art needs to be indifferent to nationalism except in as much as it explains this or that in the style of painting. Almost Mr. Oakeshott's first words are that the 'artistic achievement' of English mediæval painting is 'unsurpassed, over the period taken as a whole, in Western Europe.' Questionable, and people who take things as a whole are statisticians. Works of art need to be taken individually, *per se*, as life-enhancing organisms.

The way 'magnificent' is kept on the trot all through Mr. Oakeshott's brief text quickly reminds us of how we are losing our aesthetic heads. Confined rules have gone out; freedom has come in: which only means that it is permissible and necessary to include within the ambit of worthwhile art much more of diverse ages and cultures than was included by Mr. Berenson (see his latest book) or the rest of our great-grandparents. But within the wider ambit, a discipline of ourselves is just as imperative. We do not apply it. We muddle aesthetics sometimes with anthropology, sometimes, like Mr. Oakeshott, with antiquarianism. Mr. Oakeshott happily uses more words on denying that the Northumbrian illumination of the Book of Durrow, or the Lindisfarne Gospels, or the Echternach Gospels, owes very much to Ireland, than upon analysis of its skills and effect. Analysis is boxed into these meaningless words like magnificent and superb.

Sometimes they are applied ridiculously. Much Anglo-Saxon art, for example, (especially draughtsmanship) is a thin barbarity of ill-related forms. Valuable that we should know more about it. But would not the aesthetic conclusions of the researcher be a little less misleadng if he looked more often, say, at the drawings of Claude or Picasso or the drawings on New Guinea bark cloth? Mr. Oakeshott knows; the layman does not. Since knowing is no substitute for a trained subtlety of feeling, the layman should not be bullied. He should look at the plates—or the originals—for himself; and he may comfortably recognise meanwhile that bad writing tells its own truth about the aesthetic judgments of the writer.

There are fifty-six plates in this book. Most of them are well-printed. Some are of painting intensely rewarding, for example, in the Lindisfarne Gospels or the Book of Durrow, or in the East Anglian psalters of the fourteenth century. Others are of painting useful to know about and impossible to regard with anything more than historical or negative interest. The sixteen plates in colour show how colour reproduction is improving in London art books. But authorship is the factor which needs improving still more. Stylistic detection, plus grand epithets, is only another kind of barbarity all too unfortunately abundant.

JOURNAL IN THE NIGHT

By Theodor Haecker. *Harvill Press*. 12s. 6d.

Reviewed by E. F. F. Hill

Theodor Haecker was born in 1889, in the village of Eberbach in Würtenberg, into circumstances which were straitened, so that he had to leave his school in Esslingen before taking the final examination, and the University in Berlin, where he had gone, through the generosity of a friend, before taking his degree. After leaving the University, he went for a year or so into the Antwerp office of an export company. This was uncongenial work and, by a friend's influence, he was enabled to enter the office of Schreiber, a small publisher in Munich; here, working by day and writing by night, he was able to continue his studies; and here, too, he remained until his flat was destroyed by bombing in 1944, when he moved to a village near Augsburg where, on 9 April 1945, quite alone, he died.

Outwardly, his life was ordinary to a degree, marked by 'a massive reserve and a disconcerting silence'. Apart from his wife and children, he mixed with few; he rarely travelled; he took no open part in the political and literary life of his time. But inwardly, it was a story of a different sort. Behind his reserve and silence, there was a flexible and penetrating mind, a shrewd judgment and a lively sympathy.

None saw more clearly than he the trend of the political and social changes which began in Germany after 1918, or had a surer understanding of what Nietzsche called 'the sickness of the modern soul'. From the first he discerned the character of the Nazi movement, and he attacked its philosophy in an article written at the time Hitler came to power. He was arrested, to be released only through the help of Karl Muth and Cardinal Faulhaber. But he was marked as a three-starred enemy of the State, forbidden to say one word in public, his safety always threatened. He was arrested again in 1943. His friend, Hans Scholl, who was condemned to death as leader of an abortive students' revolt, had made notes of a conversation in which Haecker had said that above all things Germans lacked humility. Asked by his examiners what he meant by his words, he replied 'literally what I have said', and was released with the remark: *Ach so, das ist in Ordnung.*

The decisive event in his life was his reception into the Roman Catholic Church in 1920.

The *Journal* was written at night and, lest it should be discovered by the Gestapo, its pages were hidden outside Munich, in the house of Karl Muth.

Of his night-writing he notes: 'All in all the best things God has given me are my nights of solitary writing. An occasion of eternal thankfulness. They have been the happiness and good fortune of my life. And yet each night I have had to fight against their fatigue before being overcome by their happiness and good fortune. Now (1941) that I can only read with the utmost difficulty, the only way for me to learn is to write. I get to know things that I have never known; I acquire knowledge that I should never have grasped by mere thought, and that writing makes possible. And so I write for myself, and my own improvement.'

That seems explicit enough. But we must press the matter further and ask: what does he mean by 'I write for myself and my own improvement'? It may be that this is neither the originating nor the final purpose, but a means only. The answer to this—and the clue to the importance of the *Journal* is given in a letter from

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Switzerland in 1939: ' . . . my safety is always threatened more and more. I have the feeling and the belief that I am in the hands of God, but I am not on that account freed from anxiety and worry about my children. In a couple of hours I shall be back in Germany, and cannot tell what may not happen. At any rate, *once there I shall no longer be able to write the truth.*'

In this extract, and particularly in the sentence which I have italicised, Haecker establishes a positive relation to Germany and to his fellow-countrymen at a particular historical moment—the moment of their apostasy—and in so doing, he draws, with firm hand, the portrait of the absurd.

One may note the absurd from a distance, in exile, in a state of retirement from it. One may hear, from Switzerland for instance, the voice of the announcer which expresses the spiritual extinction of a people, the voice of the man who tells the truth in order to lie; one may note that a whole people is ridden by a fanatical sense of duty and is quick to accept the success of deceit and betrayal, of murder, of every sort of violence as proof of the blessing of their national man-god, for whom it is willing to die like a machine; one may see through the pretence that there can be 'works of love without love, works of light without light', that 'hatred and darkness is a sign of love and light.' And from a distance one may sit in wrathful judgment on these things. But truth cannot be spoken from a distance. It is never a simple matter to speak the truth.

The outward events of Haecker's life are brought under the category of decision. He resolves to speak the truth. He returns to Germany. But in the relation which he establishes, he separates himself from his fellow-countrymen and confirms himself in the position of an exception, not in pride but in humility, not against them but on their behalf: they are always *the* Germans; not once does he say: *we* Germans. *The* instead of *we* marks the character, not of isolation, but of an implicit unity, of the 'double yet united relationship of man to God *and* to his neighbour within the Church and through the bond of love'. This is the context of his return, not knowing what may not happen. The return gives a specific character to his position as an exception: he confronts the absurd with faith; and in so doing, he confronts not one historical moment only, but the whole irreversible, one-dimensioned historical process, to which even those who feel themselves to be its active element are enslaved. The return is an act of faith, a moment in the act of witnessing to the truth, and the writing of the *Journal* at night is forced upon him as the perfect vehicle for the testimony he has to give. Truth must declare itself before the face of the false; faith must speak out of its darkest hour, 'when every human standard and example fails me; when everything is nonsense'; love must be absolutely fearless, not in a negative but in a positive sense; not limiting itself to opposing tyranny, but in creating, out of the intractable material of existence, a new world. It is possible to build a new world.

It is the bare fact that Haecker dared to live contemporaneously, in Kierkegaard's sense, that through him there was *l'insertion de l'éternel dans le temporel*, in Péguy's sense, and that the *Journal* is the record of his witness to the truth, which is important. Everyone everywhere 'amok with lies': it was to this end that in the night of faith he wrote for himself and for his own improvement.

The quality of steadfastness, giving the sense of a great calm in the midst of the most shattering experiences, is surprising: it is *suddenly* made known to us.

MAUPASSANT

By Francis Steegmuller. *Collins.* 12s. 6d.

Reviewed by Michael Hamburger

There are writers who lend themselves to biography and writers who do not; Guy de Maupassant, in spite of his eventful life, is a difficult subject—more so than Flaubert, the subject of an earlier book by Mr. Steegmuller. The reason is that the biographer of a literary man is concerned not so much with recording events as with attempting to discover a pattern and a wholeness in those events. Flaubert was sufficiently interested in himself to meet

the biographer half-way; his letters provide a rich commentary on his life, his aspirations and his personality. Even if he had never stirred from Croisset—and he rarely did—there would still be ample material for a satisfying biography. The life of Maupassant, his disciple, was brief, active and intense; but it does not easily reveal the kind of unity which both the writer and the readers of a biography are out to grasp. Flaubert knew himself to be unique and took some trouble to find out why he was so; he never lost sight of posterity. De Maupassant, like Balzac, was more interested in his sales than in his soul; consequently it is easier for the biographer to obtain information about the first than about the second. Lastly, Maupassant was a 'natural' writer, not a pure one; and nothing is more mysterious than vulgarity, especially when, as in the case of Maupassant, vulgarity is inseparable from genius.

Nevertheless, Mr. Steegmuller has succeeded in finding at least one of the psychological keys; without indulging in elaborate analysis, he makes it clear from the start that Maupassant's emotional life was conditioned by his relationship with his parents—a close attachment to his mother, hatred and contempt for his father. 'It is a familiar spectacle—the absorption of a sensitive boy by a charming, cultivated, dignified mother not quite intelligent or selfless enough to know or to stop what she is doing. Of the two most usual, alternative consequences of such a relationship — physical indifference to women, or promiscuity—Guy from his teens did not display the former.' He did display the latter, however, and the reader has reason to be grateful to Mr. Steegmuller for sparing him both details and statistics of Maupassant's activities in this field. What Mr. Steegmuller has done is to show how Maupassant's attitude to women, fathers and husbands is reflected in the themes of his short stories and novels; rightly, he does not attempt a psychological explanation of Maupassant's greatest achievement, his ability to combine the most sordid realism with a beauty and a zest peculiar to his work. Needless to say, this achievement, too, is bound up with Maupassant's personality; two passages

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from his letters, quoted by Mr. Steegmuller, give us rare glimpses behind the scenes:

'On certain days I experience the horror of everything that is, to the point of longing for death; on other days I enjoy everything like an animal . . .

. . . We must *feel*—that is everything. We must feel as a brute beast, filled with nerves, feels, and knows that it has felt, and knows that each feeling shakes it like an earthquake. But we must not say, we must not write—for the public—that we have been so shaken. At the most, we can let it be known to a few people who will respect the confidence.'

In the best of the stories, this feeling is communicated; it is never superimposed by the author, but inherent in character, action and situation. Maupassant's detachment adds not only to the *vraisemblance*, but to the emotive power of the stories; even his cynicism and his brutality give rise to a kind of poetry.

Mr. Steegmuller's *Maupassant* is no less admirable than his book on Flaubert. He has done a good deal of original research, bibliographical as well as biographical; in a number of appendices to his book, he provides a list of short stories wrongly attributed to Maupassant by American editors, an English translation of four stories that have never been reprinted since their appearance in the paper *Gil Blas*, and notes on many unfamiliar aspects of Maupassant. Not only Flaubert—whose influence on Maupassant Mr. Steegmuller is especially qualified to assess—but Zola, Turgenev, Edmond de Goncourt and many other contemporary writers are discussed in relation to Maupassant. Mr. Steegmuller's narrative is free from the verbal fog exuded by so many biographers; his judgments are never platitudinous, but lucid, balanced and unemphatic.

If Maupassant's personality remains a little enigmatic, the enigma is preferable to a facile solution on the wrong level. Besides being a master of the short story, Maupassant was a journalist and an author intent on making enough money to escape employment in a government department; later on, he needed even greater sums to satisfy his taste for good living, aristocratic connections—mostly feminine—travel and sport. Many of his characteristics are those of a vulgar hedonist and a *parvenu*; yet he was abnormally sensitive and—long before his final insanity, due to syphilis—suffered chronically from nervous complaints. We are so used to thinking in terms of introverts and extroverts, athletes and aesthetes, artists and hacks, that a man who confounds these categories is likely to strike us as a contradiction; but Mr. Steegmuller's book should help to resolve it.

STRINDBERG

An Introduction to his Life and Work
By Brita M. E. Mortensen and Brian W. Downs. *Cambridge University Press*, 12s. 6d.

Reviewed by Hugo Manning

Public adoration on fixed occasions, such as the centenary of the birth of a famous man, is bound to have something hysterical and unreal about it. Even so, it is not to be looked down on, especially if its hero of the moment happens to be a creative genius. For the latter usually has much more spiritual development than the coloniser, the business man, the soldier, the politician, and the ruler of a nation. Together with the 'saint', particularly of the more anonymous kind, he is much closer to that spiritual personification which E. M. Forster described as being 'scarcely developed yet' when discussing Charles Mauron's book *L'homme Triple*. But we have learned that it is not always possible to associate such spiritual resourcefulness in the creative artist's work with his private life. For every Goethe, who somehow managed to achieve that harmonious maturity and balance so magnificently epitomised in the *sophrosyne* of the ancient Greeks, we have a Baudelaire, a Van Gogh or a Strindberg. The fuss and fanfares which attended the centenary of the latter's birth have now died down. But the figure of this worshipper and reviler of Ishtar, this master of esoteric torment, still evokes interest apart from the appeal of the humân conflicts he portrayed in his

dramas. There are a number of good reasons why Strindberg, the man, excites the inquisitiveness of even those who have never bothered to explore the many facets of his creative genius. His mental and spiritual crises might be seen as a reminder of what lurks in most of us like some savage, inflamed prisoner seeking complete liberty or parole. Such identification could also be carried to the frustration, disaster, rejection and loss which he felt, and even nursed, in the fantasy-states of his mind. These—sad and morbid as they sometimes seem—are often the compost of eventual triumph over human frailty and insufficiency. And creative power secured such a triumph for Strindberg.

In view of this, it is perhaps irrelevant to ask whether he was mad or not. It can also be argued that, although the creative artist may eventually have a more profound effect on his fellow-men than certain men of action, he is powerless in upsetting the social apple-cart in the direct and certain manner of madmen like Caligula and Hitler. But there is more evidence than this to suggest that madness in a creative type need not be a social menace. The act of creation is in itself often a move towards purification and clarification, a conscious or unconscious urge to impose order and meaning on life. Did Strindberg do this for some aspects of human relationships? In the long run, yes, for despite the way in which he portrayed the shapes of certain human problems, as if seen through the distorting mirrors at a circus side-show, the power of creative limelight revealed much that was hidden, and accented some of the things which were already known. It is tacitly made clear in this book—in which Mr. Downs deals with the life of Strindberg and Miss Mortensen with his writings—that the full impact of this northern writer on the sluggish stream of Swedish literature with its twitterings of poet-tasters, could hardly have been appreciated in his time. But it also reveals the general ignorance in the English-speaking world of Strindberg's scope and influence. It is such an unpretentious, lucid and valuable book that it is to be deeply regretted that it did not appear at the height of the Strindberg season, so to speak. Here the subject is not smothered with the

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padding and melodrama which characterised some of the recent attempts at Strindbergian biography, and the extent of his interests and outpourings is carefully examined. Eventually we are left flabbergasted at his strength and inquisitiveness.

Like some amazing human girandole, the X of Strindberg's passion had to discharge itself in many directions. But in him there was nothing of the debonair dilettante. He had that special kind of urgency, granted only to a few, which saved him from disintegrating into a talented but feeble Jack-of-all-trades. If his rôles as actor, journalist, painter, scientist, poet, historian, novelist, etc., were but the metamorphoses in his development, then the dramatist in him was surely the imago. But even here, in addition to certain technical flaws, there was also the stumbling-block of untamed subjectivity. As Miss Mortensen puts it, 'Strindberg . . . unlike Goethe in *Faust*, never, in all his plays, attained to a philosophic and aesthetic detachment in respect of his experience of life; and his works are the poorer for it.' Such a detachment, as we can clearly see in the case of Goethe, is a sign of a well-integrated personality. Strindberg's failure in this direction points to where the man and the artist interact most forcibly. Of all the viewpoints on Strindberg's mental condition which Mr. Downs has collected, that of Karl Jaspers seems the most penetrating. It accepts only the superficial condition of insanity and minimises its fundamental effects. 'To decide in general terms whether Strindberg was mentally deranged is valueless; for if, proceeding from a predetermined definition, one assumes mental derangement only when the individual loses his self-possession, his bearings and power to arrange his ideas, then Strindberg was not mentally deranged,' Jaspers declares. 'But he suffered from a well-known, characterisable process which occupied more than twenty years of his life and which one can call schizophrene, paraphrene or paranoia —the words do not matter.' Indeed they do not. For it is quite clear that in Strindberg we have a striking example of *controlled* mental and emotional unbalance. It is therefore not only as a literary genius that he will continue to be of value to the civilised world.

THE HEIR

V. Sackville West. *The Richards Press.* 6s.

Reviewed by Lettice Cooper

The story of the heir who, after a life of struggle and comparative poverty, suddenly comes into a rich and lordly inheritance, is nearly as old as story-telling. It remained for this century to give it a new twist. It is no longer the story of a man exchanging hard work for graceful leisure, emerging from a cramping struggle to security. There is little security at the moment for the landlord of an English estate; he is probably living in one of the cottages on it and making a living by showing charabanc loads of visitors over the Big House. Even so, in this country the feudal tradition dies hard, and Mr. Chase, who chose the 'exquisite privations' of living in his own large house, and running what was left of his own land, rather than going back to his insurance job in Wolverhampton, the richer for the purchase money for Blackboys, represents a general nostalgia in the country which led the Industrial Revolution, and has never at heart ceased to regret it.

The Heir was written nearly thirty years ago. Since then, the inheritance has become even more precarious. Blackboys would almost certainly be under the hammer and would fall not to a rich Brazilian but to the County Council, who would make it into a Training College. If Miss Sackville West were to write it now, would she make the heir to Blackboys quite so dim that it is difficult to believe in his speedy conversion to the popular landlord, and resolute landowner? Would the story gain in probability, if not in dramatic effect, if he were at the beginning a little more a Chase, and a little less a niggling, fussy, small-minded clerk? But the story remains even more today than thirty years ago a lament for a lost age and lost way of life, an expression of nostalgia in a parable told with grace and distinction.

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